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Mary Ellen Bach
1917 Orchard St.
Chicago, Ill.

THE GREAT DETECTIVE STORIES

BOOKS BY

S. S. VAN DINE

THE BISHOP MURDER CASE

THE GREENE MURDER CASE

THE BENSON MURDER CASE

THE CANARY MURDER CASE

THE SCARAB MURDER CASE

In Preparation

THE KENNEL MURDER CASE

THE WORLD'S GREAT DETECTIVE STORIES

A CHRONOLOGICAL ANTHOLOGY

COMPILED AND EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
S. S. VAN DINE
(WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT)

BLUE RIBBON BOOKS
NEW YORK

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To

JACOB MUNTER LOBSENZ, M.D.

PREFACE

It has been my object in this volume to show the evolution of the modern detective story—its inception, its various modifications and mutations, and its development into a highly specialized type of literary art. One of the difficulties that have beset my task is that many writers of excellent detective fiction have devoted themselves exclusively to the novel, finding, no doubt, the limits of the short story too restricted for their needs. Fortunately for my purpose, however, no step in the evolution of detective fiction (with the possible exception of that made by Gaboriau) has been taken without adequate presentation in short-story form. Therefore, although the names of several well-known detective authors do not appear in this volume, I have been able to substitute others of an adequately representative nature, so that the stories presented herewith cover every important phase in the development of this specific literary form from the time of Poe to the present day.

In making the selections I have been guided primarily by the demands of technical and documentary evolution, rather than by a narrowly literary standard. But inasmuch as only those fictional works that are conceived with literary distinction and projected through a more or less scholarly style can ever have a place of influence in the development of any fictional type, the test of literary excellence has operated automatically. It is true that many first-rate modern detective stories—especially those by American authors—are cast in a poor, and often an execrable, style; but it has not been necessary to draw upon them for the purposes of this volume; for there have been other stories which were equally good in plot and construction, and whose literary qualities were unquestioned, to choose from.

In determining which stories to include I have not been unduly influenced by mere dramatic effectiveness or emotional interest. Though fully recognizing the desirability, and even the necessity, of these qualities in literary entertainment, I have sought rather to present specimens which most rigidly character-

ize the subject-matter, the methods, the technic and the form of the true detective story as it has evolved along definite lines during the last three-quarters of a century. All the stories presented are characteristic, to a greater or lesser degree, of a specific phase in the development of this literary type; and though the four Continental stories have been placed last, the selections have, in the main, been arranged chronologically so as to give an idea of the actual growth of modern detective fiction. The stories as a whole may not be regarded by the reader as the "best" of their authors' work; but I believe they are, in every instance, the most representative and the most significant from the historical and technical standpoints. Every author included has played a definite part in the evolution of the literature of crime-detection; and each story embodies, in prominent and succinct fashion, the important elements (as I see them) of its creator's contribution to the growth of this *genre*.

My thanks are extended to the following publishers and authors for permission to reprint the stories included in this volume: to Mrs. Charles Rohlfs (Anna Katharine Green) for "The Doctor, His Wife, and The Clock;" to Harper Brothers for "The Lenton Croft Robberies;" to Dodd, Mead and Company and the authors for "The Pathologist To the Rescue" and "The Oracle of the Dog;" to D. Appleton and Company for "The Straw Man;" to George H. Doran and Company for "The Murder in the Mayor's Parlor;" to E. P. Dutton and Company for "The Butler" and "The Little House;" to the Macmillan Company for "Three Dead Men" and "The Swedish Match;" to the *Review of Reviews* for "Well-Woven Evidence;" and to the Macaulay Company for "Footprints in the Snow."

Thanks are also extended to Dr. N. L. Lederer for his helpful suggestions and the use of his excellent library, and for the translation of "Strange Tracks."

PREFACE TO THIS EDITION

When, a few years ago, I compiled this chronological anthology under the name of Willard Huntington Wright, it was known to no one, except my publishers, who was hiding behind the *nom de guerre* of S. S. Van Dine.

However—as if to prove that everyone loves a mystery—the literary critics began speculating on the identity of Van Dine; and it was not long thereafter that they succeeded in bringing an indictment against Willard Huntington Wright. So accurate was their detective work that there was nothing for me to do but to confess to the *Philo Vance* murders and throw myself on the mercy of the court.

I had hoped, when I decided to take up crime in a serious way, that I could keep my identity a secret; and, as I say, it was when my dual personality was unknown that I compiled this anthology. There was a delicate point of ethics involved in my compilation of what I called the world's great detective stories and in the Introduction I wrote for it. Certainly I did not want to appear to criticize any fellow craftsmen in the field of detective fiction. But since, as Willard Huntington Wright, I had been a literary critic for fifteen years, I felt that I was justified in making my selections and also in writing an historical and critical introduction to them, so long as I did not identify myself with the S. S. Van Dine who had entered the field of detective fiction as a competitor. For that reason I kept the name of S. S. Van Dine from the title page and made only a very brief reference to him in the summary of names included in my Introduction.

But, alas! within a year after my anthology appeared, it became known to all those who were generous and flattering enough to be interested, that the critic and compiler of "The Great Detective Stories" was none other than the writer of the *Philo Vance* detective stories. And inasmuch as S. S. Van Dine was very much in existence at the time "The Great Detective Stories" was published, and inasmuch as it was he

who really made the selections for this volume, I have now come out frankly and placed his name on the present edition of the book.

And I want this Preface—which is in reality an explanation—to act as my *apologia* to all my confrères in the detective-fiction field, for having taken it upon myself to make comparisons and selections and criticisms of their work. In extenuation, I may add that without them—without the inspiration their work and research gave me—I could not have joined their ranks. Therefore, in addition to my apology, I owe them my deepest thanks and appreciation.

I am happy to have this anthology included in the reprints of the Blue Ribbon books. It has already had a success far beyond my expectations and, I may add, its deserts. Perhaps that success resulted from the fact that, in my anthology, I made an approach to detective fiction from a little different point of view. I tried, in my Introduction, to distinguish between the various types of "entertainment" literature, and to set the true detective story in a class by itself, separated from the romantic story, the adventure story, the mystery story, and the crime story. Therefore, whatever criticism, either direct or implied, I have made of my fellow workers in the detective-story field, has sprung from the attitude of the analyst rather than that of the creator of fiction.

And so, in a world wherein there is a continual clash of divergent opinions, and wherein the labels of right and wrong are constantly being interchanged, I put forth this new edition of "The Great Detective Stories" under its true colors, and with the sincere hope that it will stimulate interest in the writers and the books mentioned and discussed.

WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

THE DETECTIVE STORY

By S. S. VAN DINE
(Willard Huntington Wright)

Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravished me.—*Doctor Faustus.*

I

There is a tendency among modern critics to gauge all novels by a single literary standard—a standard, in fact, which should be applied only to novels that patently seek a niche among the enduring works of imaginative letters. That all novels do not aspire to such exalted company is obvious; and it is manifestly unfair to judge them by a standard their creators deliberately ignored. Novels of sheer entertainment belong in a different category from those written for purposes of intellectual and æsthetic stimulation; for they are fabricated in a spirit of evanescent diversion, and avoid all the deeper concerns of art.

The novel designed purely for entertainment and the literary novel spring, in the main, from quite different impulses. Their objectives have almost nothing in common. The mental attitudes underlying them are antipathetic: one is frankly superficial, the other sedulously profound. They achieve diametrically opposed results; and their appeals are psychologically unrelated; in fact, they are unable to fulfil each other's function; and the reader who, at different times, can enjoy both without intellectual conflict, can never substitute the one for the other. Any attempt to measure them by the same rules is as inconsistent as to criticize a vaudeville performance and the plays of Shakespeare from the same point of view, or to hold a musical comedy to the standards by which we estimate the foremost grand opera. Even Schnitzler's "Anatol" may not be approached in the same critical frame of mind that one brings to

Hauptmann's "The Weavers"; and if "The Mikado" or "Pinafore" were held strictly to the musical canons of "Parsifal" or "Die Meistersinger," they would suffer unjustly. In the graphic arts the same principle holds. Forain and Degas are not to be judged by the æsthetic criteria we apply to Michelangelo's drawings and the paintings of Rubens.

There are four distinct varieties of the "popular," or "light," novel—to wit: the romantic novel (dealing with young love, and ending generally either at the hymeneal altar or with a prenuptial embrace); the novel of adventure (in which physical action and danger are the chief constituents: sea stories, wild-west yarns, odysseys of the African wilds, etc.); the mystery novel (wherein much of the dramatic suspense is produced by hidden forces that are not revealed until the *dénouement:* novels of diplomatic intrigue, international plottings, secret societies, crime, pseudoscience, specters, and the like); and the detective novel. These types often overlap in content, and at times become so intermingled in subject-matter that one is not quite sure in which category they primarily belong. But though they may borrow devices and appeals from one another, and usurp one another's distinctive material, they follow, in the main, their own special subject, and evolve within their own boundaries.

Of these four kinds of literary entertainment the detective novel is the youngest, the most complicated, the most difficult of construction, and the most distinct. It is, in fact, almost *sui generis,* and, except in its more general structural characteristics, has little in common with its fellows—the romantic, the adventurous, and the mystery novel. In one sense, to be sure, it is a highly specialized offshoot of the last named; but the relationship is far more distant than the average reader imagines.

II

If we are to understand the unique place held in modern letters by the detective novel, we must first endeavor to determine its peculiar appeal; for this appeal is fundamentally unrelated to that of any other variety of fictional entertainment. What, then, constitutes the hold that the detective novel has on all classes of people—even those who would not stoop to read any other kind of "popular" fiction? Why do we find men of high cultural attainments—college professors, statesmen, scientists,

philosophers, and men concerned with the graver, more advanced, more intellectual problems of life—passing by all other varieties of best-seller novels, and going to the detective story for diversion and relaxation?

The answer, I believe, is simply this: the detective novel does not fall under the head of fiction in the ordinary sense, but belongs rather in the category of riddles: it is, in fact, a complicated and extended puzzle cast in fictional form. Its widespread popularity and interest are due, at bottom and in essence, to the same factors that give popularity and interest to the cross-word puzzle. Indeed, the structure and mechanism of the cross-word puzzle and of the detective novel are very similar. In each there is a problem to be solved; and the solution depends wholly on mental processes—on analysis, on the fitting together of apparently unrelated parts, on a knowledge of the ingredients, and, in some measure, on guessing. Each is supplied with a series of overlapping clues to guide the solver; and these clues, when fitted into place, blaze the path for future progress. In each, when the final solution is achieved, all the details are found to be woven into a complete, interrelated, and closely knitted fabric.

There is confirmatory evidence of the mechanical impulse that inspires the true detective novel when we consider what might almost be called the dominant intellectual *penchant* of its inventor. Poe, the originator of the modern detective story, was obsessed with the idea of scientific experimentation. His faculty for analysis manifested itself in his reviews and in the technicalities of his poetry; it produced "Maelzel's Chess-Player"; it led him into the speculative ramifications of handwriting idiosyncrasies in "A Chapter on Autography"; it brought forth his exposition of cryptograms and code-writing in "Cryptography"; and it gave birth to his acrostic verses. His four analytic stories—"The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," "The Gold-Bug," and "The Purloined Letter"—were but a literary development, or application, of the ideas and problems which always fascinated him. "The Gold-Bug," in fact, was merely a fictional presentation of "Cryptography." (Incidentally, the number of detective stories since Poe's day that have hid their solutions in cipher messages is legion.)

There is no more stimulating activity than that of the mind; and there is no more exciting adventure than that of the intellect. Mankind has always received keen enjoyment from the mental gymnastics required in solving a riddle; and puzzles have

been its chief toy throughout the ages. But there is a great difference between waiting placidly for the solution of a problem, and the swift and exhilarating participation in the succeeding steps that lead to the solution. In the average light novel of romance, adventure, or mystery, the reader merely awaits the author's unraveling of the tangled skein of events. True, during the waiting period he is given emotion, wonder, suspense, sentiment and description, with which to occupy himself; and the average novel depends in large measure on these addenda to furnish his enjoyment. But in the detective novel, as we shall see, these qualities are either subordinated to ineffectuality, or else eliminated entirely. The reader is immediately put to work, and kept busy in every chapter, at the task of solving the book's mystery. He shares in the unfoldment of the problem in precisely the same way he participates in the solution of any riddle to which he applies himself.

Because of this singularity of appeal the detective novel has gone its own way irrespective of the *progressus* of all other fictional types. It has set its own standards, drawn up its own rules, adhered to its own heritages, advanced along its own narrow-gage track, and created its own ingredients as well as its own form and technic. And all these considerations have had to do with its own isolated purpose, with its own special destiny. In the process of this evolution it has withdrawn farther and farther from its literary fellows, until to-day it has practically reversed the principles on which the ordinary popular novel is based.

A sense of reality is essential to the detective novel. The few attempts that have been made to lift the detective-story plot out of its naturalistic environment and confer on it an air of fancifulness have been failures. A castles-in-Spain atmosphere, wherein the reader may escape from the materiality of every day, often gives the average popular novel its charm and readability; but the objective of a detective novel—the mental reward attending its solution—would be lost unless a sense of verisimilitude was consistently maintained,—a feeling of triviality would attach to its problem, and the reader would experience a sense of wasted effort. This is why in cross-word puzzles the words are all genuine: their correct determination achieves a certain educational, or at least serious, result. The "trick" cross-word puzzle with coined words and purely logomachic inventions (such as filling four boxes with e's—e-e-e-e—for the word

"ease," or with i's —i-i-i-i—for the word "eyes," or making u-u-u-u stand for the word "use") has never been popular. The philologic realism, so to speak, is dissipated. A. E. W. Mason has said somewhere that Defoe would have written the perfect detective story. He was referring to Defoe's surpassing ability to create a realistic environment.

This rule of realism suggests the common literary practise of endowing *mises en scène* with varying emotional pressures. And here again the detective novel differs from its fictional confrères; for, aside from the primary achievement of a sense of reality, atmospheres, in the descriptive and psychic sense, have no place in this type of story. Once the reader has accepted the pseudoactuality of the plot, his energies are directed (like those of the detective himself) to the working out of the puzzle; and his mood, being an intellectual one, is only distracted by atmospheric invasions. Atmospheres belong to the romantic and the adventurous tale, such as Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Scott's "Ivanhoe," and to the novel of mystery—Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw" and Bram Stoker's "Dracula," for instance.

The setting of a detective story, however, is of cardinal importance. The plot must appear to be an actual record of events springing from the terrain of its operations; and the plans and diagrams so often encountered in detective stories aid considerably in the achievement of this effect. A familiarity with the terrain and a belief in its existence are what give the reader his feeling of ease and freedom in manipulating the factors of the plot to his own (which are also the author's) ends. Hampered by strange conditions and modes of action, his personal participation in the story's solution becomes restricted and his interest in its *sequiturs* wanes. A detective novel is nearly always more popular in the country in which it is laid than in a foreign country where the conditions, both human and topographic, are unfamiliar. The variations between English and American customs and police methods, and mental and temperamental attributes, are, of course, not nearly so marked as between those of America and France; and no sharp distinction is now drawn between the English and the American detective tale. But many of the best French novels of this type have had indifferent sales in the United States. Gaston Leroux's "The Mystery of the Yellow Room," "The Perfume of the Lady in Black," and "The Secret of the Night" have never had their deserved popu-

larity in this country because of their foreign *locales;* but "The Phantom of the Opera," by the same author, which is a sheer mystery story, has been a great success here, due largely to that very unfamiliarity of setting that has worked against the success of his detective novels.

III

In the matter of character-drawing the detective novel also stands outside the rules governing ordinary fiction. Characters in detective stories may not be too neutral and colorless, nor yet too fully and intimately delineated. They should merely fulfil the requirements of plausibility, so that their actions will not appear to spring entirely from the author's preconceived scheme. Any closely drawn character analysis, any undue lingering over details of temperament, will act only as a clog in the narrative machinery. The automaton of the cheap detective thriller detracts from the reader's eagerness to rectify the confusion of the plot; and the subtly limned personality of the "literary" detective novel shunts the analytic operations of the reader's mind to extraneous considerations. Think back over all the good detective stories you may have read, and try to recall a single memorable personality (aside from the detective himself). And yet these characters were of sufficient color and rotundity to enlist your sympathetic emotions at the time, and to drive you on to a solution of their problems.

The style of a detective story must be direct, simple, smooth, and unencumbered. A "literary" style, replete with descriptive passages, metaphors, and word pictures, which might give viability and beauty to a novel of romance or adventure, would, in a detective yarn, produce sluggishness in the actional current by diverting the reader's mind from the mere record of facts (which is what he is concerned with), and focussing it on irrelevant æsthetic appeals. I do not mean that the style of the detective novel must be bald and legalistic, or cast in the stark language of commercial documentary exposition; but it must, like the style of Defoe, subjugate itself to the function of producing unadorned verisimilitude. No more is gained by stylizing a detective novel than by printing a cross-word puzzle in Garamond Italic, or Cloister Cursive, or the Swash characters of Caslon Old-style.

The material for the plot of a detective novel must be commonplace. Indeed, there are a dozen adequate plots for this kind of story on the front page of almost any metropolitan daily paper. Unusualness, *bizarrerie,* fantasy, or strangeness in subject-matter is rarely desirable; and herein we find another striking reversal of the general rules applying to popular fiction; for originality and eccentricity of plot may give a novel of adventure or mystery its main interest. The task confronting the writer of detective fiction is again the same confronting the cross-word-puzzle manufacturer—namely, the working of familiar materials into a difficult riddle. The skill of a detective story's craftsmanship is revealed in the way these materials are fitted together, the subtlety with which the clues are presented, and the legitimate manner in which the final solution is withheld.

Furthermore, there is a strict ethical course of conduct imposed upon the author. He must never once deliberately fool the reader: he must succeed by ingenuity alone. The habit of inferior writers of bringing forward false clues whose purpose is to mislead is as much a form of cheating as if the cross-word-puzzle maker should print false definitions to his words. The truth must at all times be in the printed word, so that if the reader should go back over the book he would find that the solution had been there all the time if he had had sufficient shrewdness to grasp it. There was a time when all manner of tricks, deceits, and far-fetched devices were employed for the reader's befuddlement; but as the detective novel developed and the demand for straightforward puzzle stories increased, all such methods were abrogated, and to-day we find them only in the cheapest and most inconsequential examples of this type of fiction.

In the central character of the detective novel—the detective himself—we have, perhaps, the most important and original element of the criminal-problem story. It is difficult to describe his exact literary status, for he has no counterpart in any other fictional *genre.* He is, at one and the same time, the outstanding personality of the story (though he is concerned in it only in an *ex-parte* capacity), the projection of the author, the embodiment of the reader, the *deus ex machina* of the plot, the propounder of the problem, the supplier of the clues, and the eventual solver of the mystery. The life of the book takes place in him, yet the life of the narrative has its being outside of him. In a lesser sense, he is the Greek chorus of the drama. All good

detective novels have had for their protagonist a character of attractiveness and interest, of high and fascinating attainments —a man at once human and unusual, colorful and gifted. The buffoon, the bungler, the prig, the automaton—all such have failed. And sometimes in an endeavor to be original an otherwise competent writer, misjudging the psychology of the situation, has presented us with a farcical detective or a juvenile investigator, only to wonder, later on, why these innovations failed. The more successful detective stories have invariably given us such personalities as *C. Auguste Dupin, Monsieur Lecoq, Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Thorndyke, Rouletabille, Dr. Fortune, Furneaux, Father Brown, Uncle Abner, Richard Hannay, Arsène Lupin, Dawson, Martin Hewitt, Max Carrados* and *Hanaud*—to name but a few that come readily to mind. All the books in which these characters appear do not fall unqualifiedly into the true detective-story category; but in each tale there are sufficient elements to permit broadly of the detective classification. Furthermore, these Œdipuses themselves are not, in every instance, authentic sleuths: some are doctors of medicine, some professors of astronomy, some soldiers, some journalists, some lawyers, and some reformed crooks. But their vocations do not matter, for in this style of book the designation "detective" is used generically.

We come now to what is perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the detective novel: its unity of mood. To be sure, this is a desideratum of all fiction; but the various moods of the ordinary novel—such as love, romance, adventure, wonder, mystery—are so closely related that they may be intermingled or alternated without breaking the thread of interest; whereas, in the detective novel, the chief interest being that of mental analysis and the overcoming of difficulties, any interpolation of purely emotional moods produces the effect of irrelevancy—unless, of course, they are integers of the equation and are subordinated to the main theme. For instance, in none of the best detective novels will you find a love interest,—*Sherlock Holmes* in mellow mood, holding a lady's hand and murmuring amorous platitudes, would be unthinkable. And when a detective is sent scurrying on a long-drawn-out adventure beset with physical dangers, the reader fumes and frets until his hero is again in his armchair analyzing clues and inquiring into motives.

In this connection it is significant that the cinematograph

has never been able to project a detective story. The detective story, in fact, is the only type of fiction that cannot be filmed. The test of popular fiction—namely, its presentation in visual pictures, or let us say, the visualizing of its word-pictures—goes to pieces when applied to detective stories. The difficulties confronting a motion-picture director in the screening of a detective tale are very much the same as those he would encounter if he strove to film a cross-word puzzle. The only serious attempt to transcribe a detective story onto the screen was the case of "Sherlock Holmes"; and the effort was made possible only by reducing the actual detective elements to a minimum, and emphasizing all manner of irrelevant dramatic and adventurous factors; for there is neither drama nor adventure, in the conventional sense, in a good detective novel.

IV

The origin of the detective novel need not concern us greatly. Like all species of popular art, its beginnings were probably obscure and confused. Enthusiastic critics have pointed to certain tales in the Old Testament (such as Daniel's cross-examination of the elders in the story of Susanna) as examples of early crime-detection. But if we were to extend our search into antiquity we would probably find few ancient literatures that would not supply us with evidence of a sort. Persian sources are particularly rich in stories that might be drawn into the detectival category. The Turkish and the Sanscrit likewise furnish material for the ancient-origin theory. And, of course, the Arabian "The Thousand Nights and a Night" offers numerous exhibits of criminological fiction. Herodotus, five centuries B.C., recounted what might be termed a detective tale in the story of King Rhampsinitus's treasure-house—a story of a skilfully planned theft, the falsifying of clues (no less an act than decapitation), the setting of traps for the criminal, the clever eluding of these snares, and—what should delight the modern romanticist—a "happy ending" when the scalawag wins the hand of the princess. This ancient Greek tale, by the way, might also be regarded as the inspiration for the common modern device of having a crime committed in a locked and sealed room. But even the story of Rhampsinitus was not solely Egyptian: Charles Johnston, of the Royal Asiatic Society, has

variously traced it, both in its general plot and its details, to the Thibetan, the Italian, and the Indian. And we may find it, in its essentials, retold in modern English and staring at us, in gaudy wrappers, from the shelves of our favorite bookstore. Another tale of Herodotus to which might be traced the prevalent cipher-message device of the nineteenth-century detective-story writer is the one which relates of the code pricked by Histiaios on the bald head of his slave in order to convey a secret message to Aristagoras. Chaucer has retold, in "The Tale of the Nun's Priest," a story from Cicero's "De Divinatione"; and the *Gesta Romanorum* has long been a mine of suggestions for the modern writer of crime-mystery fiction.

Antiquity unquestionably was familiar with all manner of tales and legends that might be academically regarded as the antecedents of the modern detective story; and it is interesting to note that the current connotation of the word *clue* (or *clew*) is derived from the thread with which Ariadne supplied Theseus to guide him safely from the Cretan labyrinth after he had slain the Minotaur. However, all such genealogical researches for the remote forebears of the modern crime story may best be left to the antiquary, for they are irrelevant to our purpose, which is to trace the origin and history of the specialized branch of literary form called the detective novel. While many such tales may be unearthed in the ancient records of imaginative narrative, they did not become unified into a type until toward the latter half of the nineteenth century; and it is from that time that the entire evolution of this literary *genre* has taken place.

It would be possible, no doubt, to find indications of the later detective novel in many books during the early decades of the last century. Poe, however, is the authentic father of the detective novel as we know it to-day; and the evolution of this literary type began with "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842), "The Gold-Bug" (1843), and "The Purloined Letter" (1845). In these four tales was born a new and original type of fictional entertainment; and though their structure has been modified, their method altered, their subject-matter expanded, and their craftsmanship developed, they remain to-day almost perfect models of their kind; and they will always so remain, because their fundamental psychological qualities—the very essence of their appeal—embody the animating and motivating forces in this

branch of fiction. One can no more ignore their basic form when writing a detective novel to-day than one can ignore the form of Haydn when composing a symphony, or the experimental researches of Monet and Pissarro when painting an impressionist painting.

For fifteen years after Poe there was little detective-story fiction of an influential nature. Desultory and ineffectual attempts were made to carry on the *Auguste Dupin* idea, chiefly in France, where Poe's influence was very great. Perhaps the most noteworthy is to be found in Dumas' "Le Vicomte de Bragelonne" (1848) where *D'Artagnan* enacts the rôle of detective. But even here the spirit of adventure overrides the spirit of deduction,—"Le Vicomte de Bragelonne" is, after all, a sequel to "Les Trois Mousquetaires." Five years later, in 1853, came Dickens's "Bleak House"; and in this novel appeared England's first authentic contribution to modern detective fiction. This novel, to be sure, contains many elements which to-day would not be tolerated in a strict detective story; and its technic, as was inevitable, is more suited to the novel of manners; but *Inspector Bucket* (who, by the way, was drawn from Dickens's personal friend, Inspector Field of the Metropolitan Police Force of London) is a character who deserves to rank with *Dupin* and the famous fictional sleuths who came later. In "The Mystery of Edward Drood" (which unfortunately remained unfinished at the time of Dickens's death in 1870) we have a straightaway detective story which might almost be used as a model for this type of fiction.

But ten years of criminal waters, so to speak, had passed under the detectives' bridge when "The Mystery of Edward Drood" appeared; and Dickens cannot be regarded as, in any sense, a precursor, or even developer, of the crime-mystery technic. In 1860 Wilkie Collins's "The Woman in White" had been published; and "The Moonstone" had followed eight years later, two years before the world was aware of the mysterious murder of *Edward Drood* and the ensuing unresolved melodrama amid the picturesque purlieus of old Rochester and the opium dens of Shadwell. Indeed, it was Wilkie Collins who carried on the tradition of Poe in England, and, by giving impetus to the detective-story idea and purifying its technic, paved the way for Gaboriau. *Sergeant Cuff,* though we hear his name but seldom to-day, deserves a larger and more conspicuous niche among the literary immortals of crime detection, for few of his later breth-

ren have proved themselves more efficient than did he when called upon to solve the mystery of the great diamond which *Colonel Herncastle* had secured. But Collins, because of the nature of his numerous other books, will always be classed as a dealer in adventures and mysteries, despite his contributions to the evolution of strictly problematic crime literature. At that early date the analytical crime story was not considered worthy of any writer's entire time and energy.

V

It was not until the appearance of Gaboriau's "L'Affaire Lerouge" ("The Widow Lerouge") in 1866, that the first great stride in the detective novel's development was taken. This book was the first of a long series of detective novels by Gaboriau,* in which the protagonist, *Monsieur Lecoq,* proved himself a worthy successor to Poe's *Auguste Dupin.* If we call Poe the father of detective fiction, Gaboriau was certainly its first influential tutor. He lengthened its form along rigid deductional lines, and complicated and elaborated its content. "Le dossier No. 113" ("File No. 113"), published in 1867, has deservedly become a classic of its kind; and "Monsieur Lecoq," which appeared in 1869, will, despite the remarkable fact that the criminal in the end outwits and eludes the sleuth, always remain one of the world's foremost detective stories. With Gaboriau's "L'Argent des autres" ("Other People's Money"), published posthumously in 1874 (Gaboriau died in 1873), the detective novel was permanently launched, and during the past fifty years it has taken a conspicuous and highly popular place in the fictional field.

But though Gaboriau remains to-day the foremost writer of detective fiction during the period following Poe and Collins, mention should in justice be made of that other French exponent of the *roman policier,* Fortuné du Boisgobey, whose name is often bracketed with Gaboriau's. Boisgobey was a prolific writer of detective fiction, and his work had the undoubted effect of popularizing this type of story in France. Moreover, there is no doubt that he influenced Conan Doyle, if, indeed, Doyle did not go to him for actual suggestions. Boisgobey's

* An excellent edition of Gaboriau's novels, well translated into English, is published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

first detective work was "Le Forçat colonel," which appeared in 1872; and this was followed by "Les gredins," "La tresse blonde," "Les Mystères du nouveau Paris," "Le billet rouge," "Le Cri du Sang," "La bande rouge," and others. "La main froide" was published as late as 1889.

Five years after the death of Gaboriau another writer of detective tales entered the field—the American, Anna Katharine Green—and this author has hewed to the line for nearly half a century, producing a large number of some of the best-known detective novels in English. "The Leavenworth Case," which appeared in 1878, had a tremendous popularity; but its importance lay in the fact that it went far toward familiarizing the English-speaking public with this, as yet, little-known *genre,* rather than in any inherent contribution made by it to the *genre's* evolution. This book and the numerous other detective novels written by the same author appear to many of us to-day, who have become accustomed to the complex, economical and highly rarified technic of detective fiction, as over-documented and as too intimately concerned with strictly romantic material and humanistic considerations. However, their excellent style, their convincing logic, and their sense of reality give them a literary distinction almost unique in the American criminal romance since Poe; and Mrs. Rohlf's detective, *Ebenezer Gryce,* is as human and convincing a solver of mysteries as this country has produced. There is little doubt that the novels of Anna Katharine Green have played a significant part in the historical evolution of the fiction of crime detection: certainly no roster of the foremost examples of this branch of literature would be complete without the inclusion of such books of hers as "Hand and Ring," "Behind Closed Doors," "The Filigree Ball," "The House of the Whispering Pines," and "The Step on the Stair."

A book which played a peculiar part in the history of the detective novel is "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" by Fergus Hume. This story, based on the technic of Gaboriau and influenced by the writings of Anna Katharine Green, represents what is perhaps the greatest commercial success in the history of modern detective fiction, and throws an interesting light on the English public's avidity for this type of literary diversion during the closing years of the nineteenth century. "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" has sold over half a million copies to date, and the record of its early editions is eloquently indicative

of the fact that the detective novel as a definite *genre* had, even at that time, made a place for itself in the Hall of Letters. The book, however, added nothing new to the technic or the subject-matter of detective fiction, but adhered sedulously to the lines already laid down.

Not until the appearance of "A Study in Scarlet" in 1887 (which, incidentally, was the same year in which "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" appeared), and "The Sign of Four" in 1889, did the detective novel take any definite forward step over Gaboriau. In these books and the later *Sherlock Holmes* vehicles Conan Doyle brought detective fiction into full-blown maturity. He adhered to the documentary and psychological scaffolding that had been erected by Poe and strengthened by Gaboriau, but clothed it in a new exterior, eliminating much of the old decoration, and designing various new architectural devices. In Doyle the detective story reached what might be termed a purified fruition; and the numerous changes and developments during the past two decades have had to do largely with detail, with the substitution of methods, and with variations in documentary treatment—in short, with current modes.

But in as vital, intimate, and exigent a type of entertainment as detective fiction, these modes are of great importance: they mark the distinction between that which is modern and up-to-date and that which is old-fashioned, just as do the short skirt and the long skirt in sartorial styles. The *Sherlock Holmes* stories are now obsolescent: they have been superseded by more advanced and contemporaneously alive productions in their own realm. And the modern detective-story enthusiast would find it hard sledding to read Gaboriau to-day—even "Monsieur Lecoq" and "Le dossier No. 113." Poe's four analytic tales are a treasure-trove for the student rather than a source of diversion for the general reader. The romantic and adventurous atmosphere we find in "The Gold-Bug" has now been eliminated from the detective tale; and the long introduction to "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (really an *apologia*), and the unnecessary documentation in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," act only as irritating encumbrances to the modern reader of detective fiction. Even in "The Purloined Letter"—the shortest of the four stories—there is a sesquipedalian and somewhat ponderous analysis of philosophy and mathematics, which is much too *ritenendo* and *grandioso* for the devotees of this type of fiction to-day.

VI

The first detective of conspicuous note to follow in the footsteps of *Sherlock Holmes* was *Martin Hewitt,* the creation of Arthur Morrison. *Hewitt* is less colorful than *Holmes,* less omnipotent, and far more commonplace. He was once, Mr. Morrison tells us, a lawyer's clerk, and some of the dust of his legal surroundings seems always to cling to him. But what he loses in perspicacity and incredible gifts, he makes up for, in large measure, by verisimilitude. His problems as a whole are less melodramatic and bizarre than those of *Holmes,* except perhaps those in "The Red Triangle"; and his methods are not as spectacular as those of his Baker Street predecessor. An obvious attempt has been made by Mr. Morrison to give to detective fiction an air of convincing reality; and by his painstaking and even scholarly style he has sought to appeal to a class of readers that might ordinarily repudiate all interest in so inherently artificial a type of entertainment.

In R. Austin Freeman's *Dr. Thorndyke* the purely scientific detective made his appearance. Test tubes, microscopes, Bunsen burners, retorts, and all the obscure paraphernalia of the chemist's and physicist's laboratories are his stock in trade. In fact, *Dr. Thorndyke* rarely attends an investigation without his case of implements and his array of chemicals. Without his laboratory assistant and jack-of-all-trades, *Polton,*—coupled, of course, with his ponderous but inevitable medico-legal logic—he would be helpless in the face of mysteries which *Sherlock Holmes* and *Monsieur Lecoq* might easily have clarified by a combination of observation, mental analysis, and intuitive genius. *Dr. Thorndyke* is an elderly, plodding, painstaking, humorless and amazingly dry sleuth, but so original are his problems, so cleverly and clearly does he reach his solutions, and so well written are Dr. Freeman's records, that the *Thorndyke* books rank among the very best of modern detective fiction. The amatory susceptibilities of his recording coadjutors are constantly intruding upon the doctor's scientific investigations and the reader's patience; but even with these irrelevant impediments most of the stories march briskly and competently to their inevitable conclusions. Of all the scientific detectives *Dr. Thorndyke* is unquestionably the most convincing. His science, though at

times obscure, is always sound: Dr. Freeman writes authoritatively, and the reader is both instructed and delighted.

Craig Kennedy, the scientific detective of Arthur B. Reeve, on the other hand, is far less profound: he is, in fact, a pseudo-scientist, utilizing all manner of strange divining machines and speculative systems, and employing all the latest "discoveries" in the realm of fantastic and theoretic physical research. He is not unlike a composite of all the inventors and ballyboo doctors of science who regularly supply sensational research copy for the Sunday Supplement magazines. But Mr. Reeve's stories, despite their failure to adhere to probability and to the accepted knowledge of recognized experimenters in the scientific fields, are at times ingenious and interesting, and there is little doubt that they have had a marked influence on modern detective fiction. They are unfortunately marred by a careless journalistic style. Among the many *Craig Kennedy* volumes may be mentioned "The Poisoned Pen," "The Dream Doctor," "The Silent Bullet" and "The Treasure-Train" as containing the best of Mr. Reeve's work.

Better written, conceived with greater moderation, and clinging more closely to human probabilities, are John Rhode's novels dealing with *Dr. Priestley's* adventures—"Dr. Priestley's Quest," "The Paddington Mystery," and "The Ellerby Case." *Dr.*—or, as he is generally referred to in Mr. Rhode's text, *Professor—Priestley* has many characteristics in common with *Dr. Thorndyke.* He is a schoolman, fairly well along in years, without a sense of humor, and inclined to dryness; but he is more of the intellectual scientist, or scientific thinker, than Dr. Freeman's hero. ("Priestley, cursed with a restless brain and an almost immoral passion for the highest branches of mathematics, occupied himself in skirmishing round the portals of the universities, occasionally flinging a bomb in the shape of a highly controversial thesis in some ultra-scientific journal.") His detective cases to date have been few, and he suffers by comparison with the superior *Dr. Thorndyke.*

VII

The purely intellectual detective—the professor with numerous scholastic degrees, who depends on scientific reasoning and rarified logic for the answer to his problems—has become a pop-

ular figure in the fiction of crime detection. His most extravagant personification—what might almost be termed the *reductio ad absurdum* of this type of super-sleuth—is to be found in Jacques Futrelle's *Professor Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen, PH.D., LL.D., F.R.S., M.D., etc.* The first book to recount the criminal mysteries that came under *Professor Van Dusen's* observation was "The Thinking Machine," later republished as "The Problem of Cell 13"; and this was followed by another volume of stories entitled "The Thinking Machine on the Case." These tales, despite their improbability—and often impossibility—nevertheless constitute attractive diversion of the lighter sort.

G. K. Chesterton's *Father Brown*—a quiet, plain little priest who is now definitely established as one of the great probers of mysteries in modern detective fiction—is also what might be called an intellectual sleuth, although the subtleties of his analyses depend, in large measure, on a kind of spiritual intuition —the result of his deep knowledge of human frailties. Although *Father Brown* does not spurn material clues as aids to his conclusions, he depends far more on his analyses of the human heart and his wide experience with sin. At times he is obscure and symbolic, even mystical; and too often the problems which Mr. Chesterton poses for him are based on crimes that are metaphysical and unconvincing in their implications; but *Father Brown's* conversational gifts—his commentaries, parables and observations—are adequate compensation for the reader's dubiety. The fact that *Father Brown* is concerned with the moral, or religious, aspect, rather than the legal status, of the criminals he runs to earth, gives Mr. Chesterton's stories an interesting distinction.

Similar in methods, but quite different in results, are the excellent stories by H. C. Bailey setting forth the cases of *Dr. Reginald Fortune. Dr. Fortune* is an adjunct of Scotland Yard, a friend and constant companion of *Stanley Lomas* who is a chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. Like *Father Brown, Dr. Fortune* is highly intuitional; and his final results depend on logic and his knowledge of men rather than on the evidential and circumstantial indications of the average official police investigation. And like *Father Brown* he has a gift for conversation and repartee that makes even the most sordid and unconvincing of his cases interesting, if not indeed fascinating. In addition, he is a man of amazing gifts, with a

wide range of almost incredible knowledge; but so competent is Mr. Bailey's craftsmanship that *Dr. Fortune* rarely exceeds the bounds of probability. He has, in fact, in a very short time (the first Fortune book, "Call Mr. Fortune," appeared in 1919) made a permanent and unquestioned place for himself among the first half-dozen protagonists of detective fiction.

Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie's pompous little Belgian sleuth, falls in the category of detectival logicians, and though his methods are also intuitional to the point of clairvoyance, he constantly insists that his surprisingly accurate and often miraculous deductions are the inevitable results of the intensive operation of "the little gray cells." *Poirot* is more fantastic and far less credible than his brother criminologists of the syllogistic fraternity, *Dr. Priestley, Father Brown* and *Reginald Fortune;* and the stories in which he figures are often so artificial, and their problems so far fetched, that all sense of reality is lost, and consequently the interest in the solution is vitiated. This is particularly true of the short stories gathered into the volume "Poirot Investigates." *Poirot* is to be seen at his best in "The Mysterious Affair at Styles" and "The Murder on the Links." The trick played on the reader in "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd" is hardly a legitimate device of the detective-story writer; and while *Poirot's* work in this book is at times capable, the effect is nullified by the *dénouement.*

Of an entirely different personality, yet with dialectic methods broadly akin to *Father Brown's* and *Dr. Priestley's,* is *Colonel Gore* in Lynn Brock's "The Deductions of Colonel Gore" and "Colonel Gore's Second Case." *Colonel Gore,* though ponderous and verbose, is well projected, and the crimes he investigates are well worked-out and admirably, if a bit too leisurely, presented. The various characterizations of the minor as well as the major personages of the plots, and the long descriptions of social and topographical details, tend to detract from the problems involved; but the competency of Mr. Brock's writing carries one along despite one's occasional impatience. This fault is not to be found in Ernest M. Poate's "Behind Locked Doors" and "The Trouble at Pinelands." But Mr. Poate errs on the side of amatory romance, and in "Behind Locked Doors" he introduces a puppy love affair which both mars and retards what otherwise might have been one of the outstanding modern detective novels. Even as it stands it must be given high rank; and the figure of *Dr. Bentiron*—an eccentric but lovable psycho-

pathologist—will long remain in the memory of those who make his acquaintance.

No list of what we may call the deductive detectives would be complete without the name of A. E. W. Mason's admirable *Hanaud* of the French Sûreté. *Hanaud* may almost be regarded as the Gallic counterpart of *Sherlock Holmes.* The methods of these two sleuths are similar: each depends on a combination of material clues and spontaneous thinking; each is logical and painstaking; and each has his own little tricks and deceptions and vanities. The two *Hanaud* vehicles, "At the Villa Rose" and "The House of the Arrow," are excellent examples of detective fiction, carefully constructed, consistently worked out, and pleasingly written. They represent—especially the latter—the purest expression of this type of literary divertisement; and *Hanaud* himself is a memorable and engaging addition to the great growing army of fictional sleuths. The psychological methods of crime detection, combined with an adherence to the evidences of reality, are also followed in S. S. Van Dine's "The Benson Murder Case" and "The 'Canary' Murder Case," wherein *Philo Vance,* a young social aristocrat and art connoisseur, enacts the rôle of criminologist and investigator.

Although the blind detective is a comparatively recent innovation in crime-mystery fiction, his methods belong necessarily to the logic-*cum*-intuition school, despite the fact that all his processes and conclusions are accounted for on strictly material and scientific grounds. In the various attempts at novelty made by recent detective-story writers the sightless crime specialist has been frequently introduced, so that now he has become a recognized and accepted type. The most engaging and the most easily accepted of these unique detectives is Ernest Bramah's *Max Carrados,* who made his appearance in a volume bearing his name for title in 1914. To be sure, he was endowed with gifts which recalled the strange powers of the citizens of H. G. Wells's "The Country of the Blind"; but so accurately and carefully has Mr. Bramah projected him that he must be given a place in the forefront of famous fictional sleuths. Far more miraculous, and hence less convincing, is the blind detective, *Thornley Colton,* who appears in a book which also bears his name for title, by Clinton H. Stagg.

As soon as the detective story became popular it was inevitable that the woman detective would make her appearance; and today there are a score or more of female rivals of *Sherlock Holmes.*

The most charming and capable, as well as the most competently conceived, is *Violet Strange,* who solves eight criminal problems in Anna Katharine Green's "The Golden Slipper." *Lady Molly,* in "Lady Molly of Scotland Yard" by the Baroness Orczy, is somewhat more conventional in conception but sufficiently entertaining to be regarded as a worthy deductive sister of *Violet Strange.* George R. Sims, in "Dorcas Dene, Detective," has given us a feminine investigator of considerable quality; and Arthur B. Reeve's *Constance Dunlap* has resources and capabilities of a high, even if a too melodramatic, order. *Millicent Newberry,* in Jeanette Lee's "The Green Jacket," is an unusual and appealing figure—more a corrector of destinies, perhaps, than a detective. And Richard Marsh's *Judith Lee,* in a book called simply "Judith Lee," while not technically a sleuth, happens upon the secret of many crimes through her ability as a lip-reader.

VIII

So individual and diverse has become the latter-day fictional detective that even a general classification is well-nigh impossible. In Robert Barr's "The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont" we have an Anglicized Frenchman of the old school who undertakes private investigations of a too liberal latitude to qualify him at all times as a crime specialist; but, despite his romantic adventurings and his glaring failures, he unquestionably belongs in our category of famous sleuths if only for the care and excellence with which Mr. Barr has presented his experiences. Then there is the fat, commonplace, unlovely and semi-illiterate, but withal sympathetic and entertaining, *Jim Hanvey* of Octavus Roy Cohen's book, "Jim Hanvey, Detective," who knows all the crooks in Christendom and is their friend; the nameless logician in the Baroness Orczy's "The Old Man in the Corner" and "The Case of Miss Elliott," who sits, shabby and indifferent, at his café table and holds penetrating *post mortems* on the crimes of the day; *Malcolm Sage,* of Herbert H. Jenkins's "Malcolm Sage, Detective," a fussy, bespectacled bachelor who runs a detective agency and uses methods as eccentric as they are efficient; *Lord Peter Wimsey,* the debonair and deceptive amateur of Dorothy L. Sayers's "Whose Body?"; *Jefferson Hastings,* the pathetic, ungainly old-timer of the Washington Police, whose mellow insight and shrewd deductions make first-rate reading in

"The Bellamy Case," "The Melrose Mystery" and "'No Clue!'" by James Hay, Jr.; and *Inspector Winter* and *Furneaux* —that amusing and capable brace of co-sleuths in Louis Tracy's long list of detective novels.

The alienist detective is not a far cry from the pathologist detective, and though there have been several doctors with a flair for abnormal psychology who have enacted the rôle of criminal investigator, it has remained for Anthony Wynne to give the psychiatrist a permanent place in the annals of detection. In his *Dr. Hailey,* the Harley Street specialist, (the best of whose cases is related in "The Sign of Evil,") we have an admirable detective character who mingles neurology with psychoanalysis and solves many crimes which prove somewhat beyond the ken of the Scotland Yard police. It was Henry James Forman, however, I believe, who gave us the first strictly psychoanalytical detective novel in "Guilt"—a story which, despite its unconventional ending and its singularity of material, makes absorbing reading.

The reporter sleuth—or "journalistic crime expert"—has become a popular figure in detective fiction on both sides of the Atlantic, and to enumerate his various personalities and adventures would be to fill several small-type pages with tabulations. Most famous of this clan is *Rouletabille* of Gaston Leroux's excellent detective novels, although J. S. Fletcher has created an engaging rival to the little French reporter in the figure of *Frank Spargo* who solves the gruesome mystery in "The Middle Temple Murder." Another reporter detective of memorable qualities and personality is *Robert Estabrook* in Louis Dodge's "Whispers"; and very recently there has appeared a book by Harry Stephen Keeler—"Find the Clock"—in which a Chicago reporter named *Jeff Darrell* acquires the right to sit among the select company of his fellow detective-journalists.

One of the truly outstanding figures in detective fiction is *Uncle Abner,* whose criminal adventures are recounted by Melville Davisson Post in "Uncle Abner: Master of Mysteries," and in a couple of short stories included in the volume, "The Sleuth of St. James's Square." *Uncle Abner,* indeed, is one of the very few detectives deserving to be ranked with that immortal triumverate, *Dupin, Lecoq* and *Holmes;* and I have often marveled at the omission of his name from the various articles and criticisms I have seen dealing with detective fiction. In conception, execution, device and general literary quality these stories of

early Virginia, written by a man who thoroughly knows his *métier* and is also an expert in law and criminology, are among the very best we possess. The grim and lovable *Uncle Abner* is a vivid and convincing character, and the plots of his experiences with crime are as unusual as they are convincing. Mr. Post is the first author who, to my knowledge, has used the phonetic misspelling in a document supposedly written by a deaf and dumb man as a proof of its having been forged. (The device is found in the story called "An Act of God.") If Mr. Post had written only "Uncle Abner" he would be deserving of inclusion among the foremost of detective-fiction writers, but in "The Sleuth of St. James's Square," and especially in "Monsieur Jonquelle," he has achieved a type of highly capable and engrossing crime-mystery tale. The story called "The Great Cipher" in the latter book is, with the possible exception of Poe's "The Gold-Bug," the best cipher story in English.

Another distinctive detective, but one of an entirely different character, is *Chief Inspector William Dawson* of Bennett Copplestone's "The Diversions of Dawson" and "The Lost Naval Papers"—the latter a series of secret-service stories. There is humor in Mr. Copplestone's delineation of *Dawson,* but the humor is never flippant and does not, in any sense, detract from the interest of the cases in which this rather commonplace, but none the less remarkable, Scotland Yard master of disguise plays the leading rôle. In fact, the humor is so skilfully interwoven in the plots, and is presented with such consummate naturalness, that it heightens both the character drawing of *Dawson* and the fascination of the problems he is set to solve. The literary quality of Mr. Copplestone's books is of a high order, and goes far toward placing them among the best of their *genre* that England has produced. *Dawson,* for all his shortcomings and conventional devices, is a figure of actuality, with the artificial mechanics of his craft reduced to a minimum.

John Buchan's *Richard Hannay,* who runs through a series of novels ("The Thirty-Nine Steps," "Greenmantle," "Mr. Standfast" and "The Three Hostages"), is a figure of unforgettable attraction—slow-moving yet shrewd, sentimental yet efficient—although only in the last named of the four books does he play a strictly detectival rôle, his other "cases" being of a purely adventurous or secret-service nature. A delightful type of detective—debonair, whimsical, yet withal penetrating—is *Antony Gillingham* of A. A. Milne's "The Red House Mystery"—one

of the best detective stories of recent years, as well developed as it is well written. I regret that Mr. Milne has seen fit to let his reputation as a writer of detective tales rest on this single volume. *Philip Trent,* the somewhat baffled nemesis of E. C. Bentley's "Trent's Last Case," is highly engaging, despite the fact that his elaborate deductions, based on circumstantial evidence, lead him woefully astray. Mr. Bentley's book, though unconventional in conception, is, in its way, a masterpiece. Another detective deserving of mention alongside of *Antony Gillingham* and *Philip Trent* is *Anthony Gethryn,* the solver of the criminal riddle in Philip MacDonald's entertaining book, "The Rasp"—which, incidentally, is *Gethryn's* sole vehicle of deduction.

IX

Eden Phillpotts has written some of the best detective stories in English. Not only has he proved himself a student of this type of literary entertainment, but he has brought to his task a life-long experience in the craft of writing. "The Grey Room" was the first of his essays in this field, and, for all its unconventionality of structure, immediately took its place among the leading mystery stories of the day. This was followed by "The Red Redmaynes" (a more elaborately worked-out detective novel), "A Voice from the Dark," and "Jig-Saw." Both in craftsmanship and ingenuity Mr. Phillpotts's detective tales—all of which are of a high order—seem intimately related to the novels of Harrington Hext—"The Thing at Their Heels," "Who Killed Cock Robin?," "The Monster," and "Number 87." (The last is a scientific mystery story rather than a straight detective novel.) "Who Killed Cock Robin?" is of conventional pattern and technic, but its adroitness entitles it to the first rank; "The Monster," for sheer cleverness and suspense, has few equals in contemporary detective fiction; and "The Thing at Their Heels," though ignoring the accepted canons of detective-story writing, must be placed in this category with an asterisk of distinction marking it.

A popular and prolific novelist who has long been regarded as a detective-story writer is E. Phillips Oppenheim; but while he has written several books of detective stories, they represent his secondary work, and have little place in a library devoted to the best of crime-problem fiction. Mr. Oppenheim is primarily

a writer of mystery romances and stories of diplomatic intrigue; the latter, in fact, are his forte. Even in his best-known so-called detective books—such as "Peter Ruff," "The Double Four," "The Yellow Crayon," and "The Honorable Algernon Knox, Detective"—the complications of international diplomacy and of the secret service greatly overbalance the criminological research and deductions that are essential to the true detective story. "Nicholas Goade, Detective" comes nearer to the detectival technic than any of Mr. Oppenheim's other books; but aside from its being a careless and inferior work, it is filled with irrelevancies of a romantic and adventurous nature. Nor are its criminal problems of any particular originality.

Among the most entertaining and adroitly written of modern detective novels must be placed Ronald A. Knox's two semi-satirical books, "The Viaduct Murder" and "The Three Taps." These stories attain to a high literary level, and though the amateur detective of the first fails in his deductions, and the "murder" in the second proves to be a disappointment—both of which devices are contrary to all the accepted traditions of the detective-story technic—these two books sedulously and intelligently follow the clues of their problems to a logical solution, and unflaggingly hold the reader's interest and admiration. Two other writers of marked literary capacity have tried their hand at the detective novel—Arnold Bennett and Israel Zangwill—with entertaining, if not wholly satisfactory, results. Mr. Bennett's "The Grand Babylon Hotel," though a detective story only through association and implication, contains several adventures that bring the book broadly within the detective category. Mr. Zangwill's "The Big Bow Mystery" is more in line with the tradition of the detective novel, despite the fact that its theme contraverts one of the basic principles of crime-problem fiction.

Mrs. Belloc Lowndes has made two interesting and noteworthy contributions to criminal literature: indeed, any review of the more important detective stories would be incomplete without an inclusion of her "The Chink in the Armour" and "The Lodger," the latter dealing with the famous Jack-the-Ripper murders. Burton E. Stevenson has also given us several first-rate detective novels of orthodox pattern—"The Halladay Case," "The Gloved Hand," "The Marathon Mystery," and "The Mystery of the Boule Cabinet"—the last being particularly well conceived and executed. Edgar Wallace has written

too much and too rapidly, with too little attention to his problems and too great an insistence on inexpensive "thrills," to be included in the roster of the ablest detective-tale authors; but "The Clue of the New Pin"—one of his earlier books—should be mentioned here because of the ingenious device used by the criminal to escape detection. Arthur E. McFarland's "Behind the Bolted Door?" is another detective novel which contains an entirely novel (so far as I know) device; and the interest of the story is markedly enhanced by Mr. McFarland's journalistic competency as a writer and his thorough familiarity with the various factors of his *locale*. Marion Harvey's "The Mystery of the Hidden Room" is likewise noteworthy because of the criminal device employed; and it should be added that the deductive work done by *Graydon McKelvie* is at times extremely clever. The four *Ashton Kirk* novels by John T. McIntyre—"Ashton Kirk, Investigator," "Ashton Kirk, Secret Agent," "Ashton Kirk, Special Detective," and "Ashton Kirk, Criminologist"—are a bit extravagant both in characterization and plot, but they may be justly mentioned here because of their strict adherence to the *Sherlock Holmes* tradition and their occasional ingenuity of structure.

X

Fashions in detectives have changed greatly during the past decade or so. Of late the inspired, intuitive, brilliantly logical super-sleuth of the late nineteenth century has given place to the conservative, plodding, hard working, routine investigator of the official police—the genius of Carlyle's definition, whose procedure is based largely on a transcendent capacity of taking trouble. And it must be said that this new thoroughgoing and unimaginative detective often has a distinct advantage, from the standpoint of literary interest, over the flashy intellectual detective of yore. He is more human, more plausible, and often achieves a more satisfactory solution of the criminal mysteries to which he is assigned. The reader may follow him as an equal, and share in his discoveries; and at all times a sense of reality, even of commonplace familiarity, may be maintained by the author—a sense which is too often vitiated by the inspirational methods of the older detective.

The most skilful exponent of this style of detective story is Freeman Wills Crofts. His "The Cask" and "The Ponson

Case" are masterpieces of closely-wrought construction, and, with "The Groote Park Murder," "Inspector French's Greatest Case" and "The Starvel Hollow Tragedy," stand as the foremost representatives of their kind—as much as do the novels of Gaboriau and the *Holmes* series of Conan Doyle. Indeed, for sheer dexterity of plot Mr. Crofts has no peer among the contemporary writers of detective fiction. His chief device is the prepared alibi, and this he has explored with almost inexhaustible care, weaving it into his problem with an industry matched only by the amazing industry of his sleuths.

A. Fielding has devoted his talents to this new mode of detective fiction with a success but little less than Mr. Crofts'. In "The Footsteps that Stopped" he has worked out an intricate problem along the painstaking lines of investigation characteristic of the actual methods of Scotland Yard; and in both "The Eames-Erskine Case" and "The Charteris Mystery" he has successfully followed these same methods. "The Detective's Holiday," by Charles Barry, is another good example of the plodding, naturalistic detective technic, enlivened by a foil in the presence of a typical French detective of contrasting subtlety and emotionalism. And Henry Wade's "The Verdict of You All" is a first-rate story conceived along the same lines; but it breaks away from all tradition in the climax, and turns its *dénouement* into an ironical criticism of legal procedure—a device which had a famous precedent in "The Ware Case" by Gordon Pleydell. Two earlier capable examples of the detective novel of industrious routine are A. W. Marchmont's "The Eagrave Square Mystery" and Mark Allerton's "The Mystery of Beaton Craig."

In the same classification with Crofts, Fielding and Wade belongs J. S. Fletcher, the most prolific and popular of all the current writers of detective fiction. Mr. Fletcher, however, carries his naturalism so far in the projection of his plots that his detectives are too often banal and colorless; and in many of his books the solution of the crime is reached through a series of fortuitous incidents rather than through any inherent ability on the part of his investigators. Mr. Fletcher writes smoothly, and his antiquarian researches—which he habitually weaves into the fabric of his plots—give an air of scholarship to his stories. But his problems and their solutions are too frequently deficient in drama and sequence, and his paucity of invention is too consistently glaring to be entirely satisfactory. This may be due to the

frequency with which his books appear: I believe he has published something like four a year for the past eight or ten years; and such mass production is hardly conducive of conceptional care and structural ingenuity. But Mr. Fletcher has none the less played an important part in the development of the detective novel, if for no other reason than that he has, by his fluent style and authoritative realism, given an impetus to the reading of this type of novel among a large class of persons who, but a few years ago, were unfamiliar with the literature of crime detection. Mr. Fletcher's earlier books are his best; and I have yet to read one of his more recent novels that equals his "The Middle Temple Murder" published ten years ago.

It will be noted that the great majority of detective stories I have selected for mention are by English authors. The reason for the decided superiority of English detective stories over American detective stories lies in the fact that the English novelist takes this type of fiction more seriously than we do. The best of the current writers in England will turn their hand occasionally to this *genre,* and perform their task with the same conscientious care that they confer on their more serious books. The American novelist, when he essays to write this kind of story, does so with contempt and carelessness, and rarely takes the time to acquaint himself with his subject. He labors under the delusion that a detective novel is an easy and casual kind of literary composition; and the result is a complete failure. In this country we have few detective novels of the superior order of such books as Bentley's "Trent's Last Case," Mason's "The House of the Arrow," Crofts' "The Cask," Hext's "Who Killed Cock Robin?", Phillpotts's "The Red Redmaynes," Freeman's "The Eye of Osiris," Knox's "The Viaduct Murder," Fielding's "The Footsteps That Stopped," Milne's "The Red House Mystery," Bailey's *Mr. Fortune* series, and Chesterton's *Father Brown* stories, to mention but a scant dozen of the more noteworthy additions to England's rapidly increasing detective library.

XI

In the foregoing brief resumé of the detective fiction which followed upon the appearance of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories I have confined myself to English and American efforts. We must not, however, overlook the many excellent detective stories that

have come out of France since the advent of *Monsieur Lecoq*. The Gallic temperament seems particularly well adapted to the subtleties and intricacies of the detective novel; and a large number of books of the *roman policier* type have been published in France during the past half century, most of them as yet untranslated into English. The foremost of the modern French writers of detective fiction is Gaston Leroux; in fact, the half dozen or so novels comprising the *Aventures Extraordinaires de Joseph Rouletabille, Reporter* are among the finest examples of detective stories we possess. "Le Mystère de la Chambre Jaune" ("The Mystery of the Yellow Room"), "Le Parfum de la Dame en Noir" ("The Perfume of the Lady in Black"), "Rouletabille chez le Tsar" ("The Secret of the Night"), "Le Château Noir," "Les Étranges Noces de Rouletabille," "Rouletabille chez Krupp" and "Le Crime de Rouletabille" ("The Phantom Clue") represent the highest standard reached by the detective novel in France since the literary demise of *Lecoq*, and contain a variety of ideas and settings which gives them a diversity of appeal. *Rouletabille* is engagingly drawn, and his personality holds the reader throughout.

More popular, and certainly more ingenious, though neither as scholarly nor as strictly orthodox, are the famous *Arsène Lupin* stories of Maurice Leblanc. *Lupin* in the records of his earlier adventures is a shrewd and dashing criminal—*"un gentleman-cambrioleur"*—and therefore quite the reverse of the regulation detective; but he indulges in detective work—in deductions, in the following of clues, in the subtleties of logic, and in the solution of criminal problems—which is as brilliant and traditional as that of any fictional officer of the Sûreté. In his more recent escapades he gives over his anti-legal propensities, and becomes a sleuth wholly allied with the powers of righteousness. Some of the best and most characteristic examples of conventional modern detective stories are to be found in "Les Huit Coups de l'Horloge." To the solution of the criminal problems involved in this book *Lupin* brings not only a keen and penetrating mind, but the fruits of a vast first-hand experience with crime.

Germany's efforts at the exacting art of detective-story writing are, in the main, abortive and ponderous. An air of heavy officialdom hangs over the great majority of them; and one rarely finds the amateur investigator—that most delightful of all detectives—as the central figure of German crime-problem

stories. The hero is generally a hide-bound, system-worshiping officer of the *Polizei;* and sometimes as many as three detectives share the honor of bringing a malefactor to justice. Even the best of the Germanic attempts at this literary *genre* read somewhat like painstaking official reports, lacking imagination and dramatic suspense. There is little subtlety either in the plots or the solutions; and the methods employed are generally obvious and heavy-footed. Characteristic of the German detective story are the books of Dietrich Theden—" Der Advokatenbauer," " Die zweite Busse," " Ein Verteidiger," and a volume of short stories entitled " Das lange Wunder." And among the other better-known works of this type might be mentioned J. Kaulbach's " Die weisse Nelke," P. Weise's " Der Rottnerhof," R. Kohlrausch's " In der Dunkelkammer," and P. Meissner's " Platanen-Allee Nr. 14." Karl Rosner, the author of " Der Herr des Todes " and " Die Beichte des Herrn Moritz von Cleven," is also one of the leading German writers of detective stories.

The Austrian authors who have devoted their energies to crime-problem fiction follow closely along German lines, though we occasionaly find in them a lighter and more imaginative attitude, although here, too, a stodgy officialism and a reportorial brevity detract from the dramatic interest. Balduin Groller is perhaps the most capable and inventive of the Austrian detective-story writers: his *Detektiv Dagobert* is perhaps Austria's nearest approach to *Sherlock Holmes.* Adolph Weissl (who was, I believe, a former official of the Vienna police) also has an extensive reputation as a writer of detective stories. His best-known, perhaps, are " Schwarze Perlen " and " Das grüne Auto." The latter has been translated into English under the title of " The Green Motor Car."

The other European countries are also far behind France and England in the production of this kind of narrative entertainment. Russia is too deeply sunk in Zolaesque naturalism to be interested in sheer literary artifice, and the detective novel as a *genre* is unknown to that country. Only in occasional stories do we find even an indication of it, although when a Russian author does turn his hand to crime detection he endows his work with a convincing realism. Italy's creative spirit is not sufficiently mentalized and detached to maintain the detective-story mood; but Olivieri, in " Il Colonnello," and Ottolengui, in " Suo Figlio," have given us fairly representative examples of the detective tale; and Luigi Capuana has written several stories which

may broadly be classed as "detective." The Pole, Carl von Trojanowsky, has written, among other books, "Erzählungen eines Gerichtsarztes"; but this work cannot qualify wholly as detective fiction. There are, however, certain indications that the Scandinavian countries may soon enter the field as competitors of France and England and America. A Swedish writer, under the *nom de guerre* of Frank Heller, has had a tremendous success in Europe with a series of novels setting forth the exploits of a *Mr. Collin*—a kind of Continental *Raffles*—and several of his books have been translated into English: "The London Adventures of Mr. Collin," "The Grand Duke's Finances," "The Emperor's Old Clothes," "The Strange Adventures of Mr. Collin," and "Mr. Collin Is Ruined." They are not, however, true detective novels; but the germ of the species is in them, and they indicate an unmistakable tendency toward the Poe-Gaboriau-Doyle tradition. Far more orthodox, and with a firmer grasp of the principles of detective-fiction technic, are the books of the Danish writer, Sven Elvestad—"Der rätselhafte Feind," "Abbe Montrose," "Das Chamäleon" and "Spuren im Schnee." Elvestad also writes detective stories under the name of Stein Riverton. Then there is the popular Norwegian author, Oevre Richter Frich, whose detective, *Asbjorn Krag*, is almost as well known in Norway as *Holmes* is in England.

XII

So much confusion exists regarding the limits and true nature of the detective story, and so often is this *genre* erroneously classified with the secret-service story and the crime story, that a word may properly be said about the very definite distinctions that exist between the latter type and the specialized detective type. While the secret-service story very often depends on an analysis of clues and on deductive reasoning, and while it also possesses a protagonist whose task is the unearthing of secrets and the thwarting of plots, these conditions are not essential to it; and herein lies a fundamental difference between the secret-service agent and the regulation detective. The one is, in the essence of his profession, an adventurer, whereas the other is a *deus ex machina* whose object it is to solve a given problem and thereby bring a criminal to book. No matter how liberally the secret-service story may have borrowed from the methods of

detective fiction, its growth has been along fundamentally different lines from those of detective fiction; and during the past few decades it has developed a distinctive technic and evolved a structure characteristically its own. It is true that famous fictional detectives have, on occasion, been shunted successfully to secret-service work (like *Dawson* in "The Lost Naval Papers," *Hannay* in "Greenmantle" and "The Thirty-Nine Steps," *Max Carrados* in "The Coin of Dionysius," and even *Sherlock Holmes* in an occasional adventure); but these variations have, in no wise, brought the secret-service story into the strict category of detective fiction. That the appeals in these two literary types are often closely related, is granted; but this fact is incidental rather than necessary.

The best and truest type of secret-service story may be found in the writings of William Le Queux—in "The Invasion," "Donovan of Whitehall," "The Czar's Spy," and "The Mystery of the Green Ray," for instance. And the novels of E. Phillips Oppenheim contain many of the most capable and diverting stories of this type to be found in English. Lord Frederick Hamilton has introduced a welcome element of novelty into the secret-service formula by way of his *P. J. Davenant* series—"Nine Holiday Adventures of Mr. P. J. Davenant," "Some Further Adventures of Mr. P. J. Davenant," "The Education of Mr. P. J. Davenant," and "The Beginnings of Mr. P. J. Davenant." Robert Allen, in "Captain Gardiner of the International Police," has given us a first-rate secret-service-adventure book; and J. A. Ferguson, in "The Stealthy Terror," has created noteworthy entertainment in this field. One of the best of recent secret-service romances is J. Aubrey Tyson's "The Scarlet Tanager"; and in "The Unseen Hand" Clarence Herbert New has written a series of diplomatic adventures which rank high as fictional secret-service documents. But for all the superficial similarity between these books and the detective adventures of the official and unofficial peace-time sleuths, the secret-service narrative has played no part in the narrow and intensive process of the detective story's evolution; and in its more rigid projections it differs radically from the definite and highly specialized form of detective fiction.

This is likewise true of the crime story wherein the criminal is the hero—for example, the stories of *Raffles* by E. W. Hornung, and the early adventures of Maurice Leblanc's *Arsène Lupin*. Both in appeal and technic the detective tale and the criminal-

hero tale are basically unlike. The author of the latter must, first of all, arouse the reader's sympathy by endowing his hero with humanitarian qualities (the picturesque Robin Hood is almost as well known to-day for his philanthropy as for his brigandage); and, even when this lenient attitude has been evoked, the intellectual activity exerted by the reader in an effort to solve the book's problem is minimized by the fact that all the knots in the tangled skein have been tied before his eyes by the central character. Moreover, there is absent from his quest that ethical enthusiasm which is always a stimulus to the follower of an upright detective tracking down an enemy of society—a society of which the reader is a member and therefore exposed to the dangers of anti-social plottings on the part of the criminal. The projection of oneself into the machinations of a super-criminal (such as Wyndham Martin's *Anthony Trent*) is a physical and adventurous emotion, whereas the cooperation extended by the reader to his favorite detective is wholly a mental process. Even *Vautrin,* Balzac's great criminal hero, does not inspire the reader with emotions or reactions in any sense similar to those produced by *Dupin, Monsieur Lecoq, Holmes, Father Brown,* or *Uncle Abner.* And for all the moral platitudes of Barry Pain's *Constantine Dix* and the inherently decent qualities of Louis Joseph Vance's *Lone Wolf*—both of whom had the courage to war upon society single-handed—we cannot accept them in the same spirit, or with the same sense of partnership, that we extend to the great sleuths of fiction, who have the organized police of the world at their back. The hero of detective fiction must stand outside of the plot, so to speak: his task is one of ferreting out impersonal mysteries; and he must come to his work with no more intimate relationship to the problem than is possessed by the reader himself.

XIII

The subject-matter of a detective story—that is, the devices used by the criminal and the methods of deduction resorted to by the detective—is a matter of cardinal importance. The habitual reader of the detective novel has, during the past quarter of a century, become a shrewd critic of its technic and means. He is something of an expert, and, like the motion-picture enthu-

siast, is thoroughly familiar with all the devices and methods of his favorite craft. He knows immediately if a story is old-fashioned, if its tricks are hackneyed, or if its approach to its problem contains elements of originality. And he judges it by its ever shifting and developing rules. Because of this perspicacious attitude on his part a stricter form and a greater ingenuity have been imposed on the writer; and the fashions and inventions of yesterday are no longer used except by the inept and uninformed author.

For example, such devices as the dog that does not bark and thereby reveals the fact that the intruder is a familiar personage (Doyle's "Silver Blaze" and the Baroness Orczy's "The York Mystery"); the establishing of the culprit's identity by dental irregularities (Freeman's "The Funeral Pyre," Leblanc's "Les Dents de Tigre," and Morrison's "The Case of Mr. Foggatt"); the finding of a distinctive cigarette or cigar at the scene of the crime (used several times in the *Raffles* stories, in Knox's "The Three Taps," Groller's "Die feinen Zigarren," and Doyle's "The Boscombe Valley Mystery"); the cipher message containing the crime's solution (Wynn's "The Double Thirteen," Freeman's "The Moabite Cipher" and "The Blue Scarab," and Doyle's "The Adventure of the Dancing Men"); the murdering—generally stabbing—of a man in a locked room after the police have broken in (Chesterton's "The Wrong Shape," Zangwill's "The Big Bow Mystery," and Caroline Wells's "Spooky Hollow"); the commission of the murder by an animal (Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Doyle's "The Speckled Band" and "The Hound of the Baskervilles"); the phonograph alibi (Freeman's "Mr. Pointing's Alibi" and Doyle's "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone"); the shooting of a dagger from a gun or other projecting machine to avoid proximity (Freeman's "The Aluminium Dagger" and Phillpotts's "Jig-Saw"); the spiritualistic séance or ghostly apparition to frighten the culprit into a confession (McFarland's "Behind the Bolted Door?" and Phillpotts's "A Voice from the Dark"); the "psychological" word-association test for guilt (Kennedy's "The Scientific Cracksman" and Poate's "Behind Locked Doors"); the dummy figure to establish a false alibi (MacDonald's "The Rasp" and Doyle's "The Empty House"); the forged fingerprints (Freeman's "The Red Thumb Mark" and "The Cat's Eye," and Stevenson's "The Gloved Hand"),—these, and a score of other devices, have now been relegated to the discard; and the author who

would again employ them would have no just claim to the affections or even the respect of his readers.

G. K. Chesterton, in his introduction to a detective story by Walter S. Masterman, gives a list of many of the devices that have now come to be regarded as antiquated. He says: "The things he [Mr. Masterman] does not do are the things being done everywhere to-day to the destruction of true detective fiction and the loss of this legitimate and delightful form of art. He does not introduce into the story a vast but invisible secret society with branches in every part of the world, with ruffians who can be brought in to do anything or underground cellars that can be used to hide anybody. He does not mar the pure and lovely outlines of a classical murder or burglary by wreathing it round and round with the dirty and dingy red tape of international diplomacy; he does not lower our lofty ideas of crime to the level of foreign politics. He does not introduce suddenly at the end somebody's brother from New Zealand, who is exactly like him. He does not trace the crime hurriedly in the last page or two to some totally insignificant character, whom we never suspected because we never remembered. He does not get over the difficulty of choosing between the hero and the villain by falling back on the hero's cabman or the villain's valet. He does not introduce a professional criminal to take the blame of a private crime; a thoroughly unsportsmanlike course of action, and another proof of how professionalism is ruining our national sense of sport. He does not introduce about six people in succession to do little bits of the same small murder, one man to bring the dagger, and another to point it, and another to stick it in properly. He does not say it was all a mistake, and that nobody ever meant to murder anybody at all, to the serious disappointment of all humane and sympathetic readers. . . ."

But, strangely enough, Mr. Masterman does something much worse and more inexcusable than any of the things Mr. Chesterton enumerates,—he traces the crime to the detective himself! Such a trick is neither new nor legitimate, and the reader feels not that he has been deceived fairly by a more skilful mind than his own, but deliberately lied to by an inferior. To a certain extent Gaston Leroux is guilty of this subterfuge in "The Mystery of the Yellow Room"; but here *Rouletabille,* and not the guilty detective, is the central nemesis; and it is the former's ingenious probing and reasoning that unmasks the culprit. A similar situation is to be found in the story called "The

Cat Burglar" in H. C. Bailey's "Mr. Fortune, Please," and also in "The Winning Clue" by James Hay, Jr. In Israel Zangwill's "The Big Bow Mystery" the device is again used; but here it is entirely legitimate, for the situation consists of a specified and recognized battle of wits. A variation of this trick is resorted to in one of Agatha Christie's *Poirot* books—"The Murder of Roger Ackroyd"—but without any extenuating circumstances.

In this connection it should be pointed out that a certain "gentleman's agreement" has grown up between the detective-story writer and the public—the outcome of a definite development in the relationship necessary for the projection of this type of fiction. And not only has the reader a right to expect and demand fair treatment from an author along the lines tacitly laid down and according to the principles involved, but an author who uses this trust for the purpose of tricking his co-solver of a criminal problem immediately forfeits all claim to the reading public's consideration.

A word in parting should be said in regard to the primary theme of the detective novel, for herein lies one of its most important elements of interest. Crime has always exerted a profound fascination over humanity, and the more serious the crime the greater has been that appeal. Murder, therefore, has always been an absorbing public topic. The psychological reasons for this morbid and elemental curiosity need not be gone into here; but the fact itself supplies us with the explanation of why a murder mystery furnishes a far more fascinating *raison d'être* in a detective novel than does any lesser crime. All the best and most popular books of this type deal with mysteries involving human life. Murder would appear to give added zest to the solution of the problem, and to render the satisfaction of the solution just so much greater. The reader feels, no doubt, that his efforts have achieved something worth while—something commensurate with the amount of mental energy which a good detective novel compels him to expand.

THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

EDGAR ALLAN POE *was born at Boston, Massachusetts, on January 19, 1809. He was adopted by John Allan, a tobacco merchant, after the death of his parents in 1811. He attended Manor House School, near London, and on returning to Richmond, Virginia, studied with a private tutor. He spent one year at the University of Virginia, and in 1827 enlisted in the United States Army and served two years. In 1830 he entered West Point, but was dismissed by court-martial after six months' attendance. From then on his efforts were devoted to supporting himself by his pen. His winning of a prize of $100 from the "Saturday Visitor," a literary monthly, for his story, "MS. Found in a Bottle," brought him a certain amount of recognition; and soon afterwards he became editor of the "Southern Literary Messenger" at Richmond, a periodical in whose columns he published many of his best known critiques. He contributed also to the New York "Quarterly Review," and later became editor of "Graham's Magazine"—a post he held until 1844. He died in Baltimore in 1849.*

His first book—"Tamerlane and Other Poems"—was brought out by a printer in 1827; and four years later "Poems" appeared. Two volumes of stories and sketches were published in 1839; and "The Raven, and Other Poems" appeared in 1845. He excelled in three types of literary composition—criticism, poetry, and the short story. His three detective stories, which have had such a profound influence on this fictional genre—"The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter"—were published in 1841, 1842 and 1845 respectively. "The Gold-Bug," his famous cipher story, bears the date of 1843.

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue" has been chosen for inclusion here in preference to the famous "The Purloined Letter" because it deals with a greater number of detectival elements, and establishes more succinctly the future trend of this type of fiction.

THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

By Edgar Allan Poe

What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions, are not beyond *all* conjecture.—*Sir Thomas Browne: Urn Burial.*

The mental features discoursed of as the analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis. We appreciate them only in their effects. We know of them, among other things, that they are always to their possessor, when inordinately possessed, a source of the liveliest enjoyment. As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talent into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of hieroglyphics; exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of *acumen* which appears to the ordinary apprehension preternatural. His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method, have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.

The faculty of re-solution is possibly much invigorated by mathematical study, and especially by that highest branch of it which, unjustly, and merely on account of its retrograde operations, has been called, as if *par excellence,* analysis. Yet to calculate is not in itself to analyze. A chess-player, for example, does the one without effort at the other. It follows that the game of chess, in its effects upon mental character, is greatly misunderstood. I am not now writing a treatise, but simply prefacing a somewhat peculiar narrative by observations very much at random; I will therefore take occasion to assert that the higher powers of the reflective intellect are more decidedly and more usefully tasked by the unostentatious game of draughts than by all the elaborate frivolity of chess. In this latter, where the pieces have different and *bizarre* motions, with various and variable values, what is only complex is mistaken (a not unusual

error) for what is profound. The *attention* is here called powerfully into play. If it flag for an instant, an oversight is committed, resulting in injury or defeat. The possible moves being not only manifold but involute, the chances of such oversights are multiplied; and in nine cases out of ten it is the more concentrative rather than the more acute player who conquers. In draughts, on the contrary, where the moves are *unique* and have but little variation, the probabilities of inadvertence are diminished, and the mere attention being left comparatively unemployed, what advantages are obtained by either party are obtained by superior *acumen*. To be less abstract—let us suppose a game of draughts where the pieces are reduced to four kings, and where, of course, no oversight is to be expected. It is obvious that here the victory can be decided (the players being at all equal) only by some recherché movement, the result of some strong exertion of the intellect. Deprived of ordinary resources, the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith, and not unfrequently sees thus, at a glance, the sole methods (sometimes indeed absurdly simple ones) by which he may seduce into error or hurry into miscalculation.

Whist has long been noted for its influence upon what is termed the calculating power; and men of the highest order of intellect have been known to take an apparently unaccountable delight in it, while eschewing chess as frivolous. Beyond doubt there is nothing of a similar nature so greatly tasking the faculty of analysis. The best chess-player in Christendom *may* be little more than the best player of chess; but proficiency in whist implies capacity for success in all those more important undertakings where mind struggles with mind. When I say proficiency, I mean that perfection in the game which includes a comprehension of *all* the sources whence legitimate advantage may be derived. These are not only manifold but multiform, and lie frequently among recesses of thought altogether inaccessible to the ordinary understanding. To observe attentively is to remember distinctly; and, so far, the concentrative chess-player will do very well at whist; while the rule of Hoyle (themselves based upon the mere mechanism of the game) are sufficiently and generally comprehensible. Thus to have a retentive memory, and to proceed by "the book," are points commonly regarded as the sum-total of good playing. But it is in matters beyond the limits of mere rule that the skill of the analyst is

evinced. He makes, in silence, a host of observations and inferences. So, perhaps, do his companions; and the difference in the extent of the information obtained lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the quality of the observation. The necessary knowledge is that of *what* to observe. Our player confines himself not at all; nor, because the game is the object, does he reject deductions from things external to the game. He examines the countenance of his partner, comparing it carefully with that of each of his opponents. He considers the mode of assorting the cards in each hand; often counting trump by trump, and honour by honour, through the glances bestowed by their holders upon each. He notes every variation of face as the play progresses, gathering a fund of thought from the differences in the expression of certainty, of surprise, of triumph, or of chagrin. From the manner of gathering up a trick he judges whether the person taking it can make another in the suit. He recognizes what is played through feint, by the air with which it is thrown upon the table. A casual or inadvertent word; the accidental dropping or turning of a card, with the accompanying anxiety or carelessness in regard to its concealment; the counting of the tricks, with the order of their arrangement; embarrassment, hesitation, eagerness or trepidation—all afford, to his apparently intuitive perception, indications of the true state of affairs. The first two or three rounds having been played, he is in full possession of the contents of each hand, and thenceforward puts down his cards with as absolute a precision of purpose as if the rest of the party had turned outward the faces of their own.

The analytical power should not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often remarkably incapable of analysis. The constructive or combining power, by which ingenuity is usually manifested, and to which the phrenologists (I believe erroneously) have assigned a separate organ, supposing it a primitive faculty, has been so frequently seen in those whose intellect bordered otherwise upon idiocy, as to have attracted general observation among writers on morals. Between ingenuity and the analytic ability there exists a difference far greater indeed than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character very strictly analogous. It will be found, in fact, that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the *truly* imaginative never otherwise than analytic.

The narrative which follows will appear to the reader somewhat in the light of a commentary upon the propositions just advanced.

Residing in Paris during the spring and part of the summer of 18—, I there became acquainted with a Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin. This young gentleman was of an excellent—indeed, of an illustrious family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world, or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes. By courtesy of his creditors, there still remained in his possession a small remnant of his patrimony; and upon the income arising from this, he managed by means of a rigorous economy to procure the necessaries of life, without troubling himself about its superfluities. Books, indeed, were his sole luxuries, and in Paris these are easily obtained.

Our first meeting was at an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre, where the accident of our both being in search of the same very rare and very remarkable volume brought us into closer communion. We saw each other again and again. I was deeply interested in the little family history which he detailed to me with all that candor which a Frenchman indulges whenever mere self is his theme. I was astonished, too, at the vast extent of his reading; and, above all, I felt my soul enkindled within me by the wild fervor and the vivid freshness of his imagination. Seeking in Paris the objects I then sought, I felt that the society of such a man would be to me a treasure beyond price; and this feeling I frankly confided to him. It was at length arranged that we should live together during my stay in the city; and as my worldly circumstances were somewhat less embarrassed than his own, I was permitted to be at the expense of renting and furnishing, in a style which suited the rather fantastic gloom of our common temper, a time-eaten and grotesque mansion, long deserted through superstitions into which we did not inquire, and tottering to its fall in a retired and desolate portion of the Faubourg St. Germain.

Had the routine of our life at this place been known to the world, we should have been regarded as madmen—although, perhaps, as madmen of a harmless nature. Our seclusion was perfect. We admitted no visitors. Indeed, the locality of our retirement had been carefully kept a secret from my own former associates; and it had been many years since Dupin

had ceased to know or be known in Paris. We existed within ourselves alone.

It was a freak of fancy in my friend (for what else shall I call it?) to be enamored of the Night for her own sake; and into this *Bizarrerie,* as into all his others, I quietly fell; giving myself up to his wild whims with a perfect *abandon.* The sable divinity would not herself dwell with us always; but we could counterfeit her presence. At the first dawn of the morning we closed all the massive shutters of our old building; lighting a couple of tapers which, strongly perfumed, threw out only the ghastliest and feeblest of rays. By the aid of these we then busied our souls in dreams—reading, writing, or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of the true Darkness. Then we sallied forth into the streets, arm in arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford.

At such times I could not help remarking and admiring (although from his rich ideality I had been prepared to expect it) a peculiar analytic ability in Dupin. He seemed, too, to take an eager delight in its exercise—if not exactly in its display—and did not hesitate to confess the pleasure thus derived. He boasted to me, with a low chuckling laugh, that most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms, and was wont to follow up such assertions by direct and very startling proofs of his intimate knowledge of my own. His manner at these moments was frigid and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble which would have sounded petulantly but for the deliberateness and entire distinctness of the enunciation. Observing him in these moods, I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent.

Let it not be supposed from what I have just said that I am detailing any mystery, or penning any romance. What I have described in the Frenchman was merely the result of an excited or perhaps of a diseased intelligence. But of the character of his remarks at the periods in question an example will best convey the idea.

We were strolling one night down a long dirty street, in the vicinity of the Palais Royal. Being both apparently occu-

pied with thought, neither of us had spoken a syllable for fifteen minutes at least. All at once Dupin broke forth with these words:

"He is a very little fellow, that's true, and would do better for the *Théâtre des Variétés.*"

"There can be no doubt of that," I replied unwittingly, and not at first observing (so much had I been absorbed in reflection) the extraordinary manner in which the speaker had chimed in with my meditations. In an instant afterwards I recollected myself, and my astonishment was profound.

"Dupin," said I gravely, "this is beyond my comprehension. I do not hesitate to say that I am amazed, and can scarcely credit my senses. How was it possible you should know I was thinking of——?" Here I paused, to ascertain beyond a doubt whether he really knew of whom I thought.

—— "of Chantilly," said he; "why do you pause? You were remarking to yourself that his diminutive figure unfitted him for tragedy."

This was precisely what had formed the subject of my reflections. Chantilly was a *quondam* cobbler of the Rue St. Denis, who, becoming stage-mad, had attempted the *rôle* of Xerxes, in Crébillon's tragedy so called, and been notoriously pasquinaded for his pains.

"Tell me, for Heaven's sake," I exclaimed, "the method—if method there is—by which you have been enabled to fathom my soul in this matter." In fact, I was even more startled than I would have been willing to express.

"It was the fruiterer," replied my friend, "who brought you to the conclusion that the mender of soles was not of sufficient height for Xerxes *et id genus omne.*"

"The fruiterer!—you astonish me—I know no fruiterer whomsoever."

"The man who ran up against you as we entered the street—it may have been fifteen minutes ago."

I now remembered that, in fact, a fruiterer, carrying upon his head a large basket of apples, had nearly thrown me down by accident as we passed from the Rue C—— into the thoroughfare where we stood; but what this had to do with Chantilly I could not possibly understand.

There was not a particle of *charlatanerie* about Dupin. "I will explain," he said; "and that you may comprehend all clearly, we will first retrace the course of your meditations from the mo-

ment in which I spoke to you until that of the *rencontre* with the fruiterer in question. The larger links of the chain ran thus —Chantilly, Orion, Dr. Nichols, Epicurus, Stereotomy, the street stones, the fruiterer."

There are few persons who have not at some period of their lives amused themselves in retracing the steps by which particular conclusions of their own minds have been attained. The occupation is often full of interest; and he who attempts it for the first time is astonished by the apparently illimitable distance and incoherence between the starting-point and the goal. What then must have been my amazement when I heard the Frenchman speak what he had just spoken, and when I could not help acknowledging that he had spoken the truth. He continued:

"We had been talking of horses, if I remember aright, just before leaving the Rue C——. This was the last subject we discussed. As we crossed into this street, a fruiterer, with a large basket upon his head, brushing quickly past us, thrust you upon a pile of paving-stones collected at a spot where the causeway is undergoing repair. You stepped upon one of the loose fragments, slipped, slightly sprained your ankle, appeared vexed or sulky, muttered a few words, turned to look at the pile, and then proceeded in silence. I was not particularly attentive to what you did; but observation has become with me, of late, a species of necessity.

"You kept your eyes upon the ground—glancing, with a petulant expression, at the holes and ruts in the pavement (so that I saw you were still thinking of the stones), until we reached the little alley called Lamartine, which has been paved, by way of experiment, with the overlapping and riveted blocks. Here your countenance brightened up, and, perceiving your lips move, I could not doubt that you murmured the word 'stereotomy,' a term very affectedly applied to this species of pavement. I knew that you could not say to yourself 'stereotomy' without being brought to think of atomies, and thus of the theories of Epicurus; and since, when we discussed this subject not very long ago, I mentioned to you how singularly, yet with how little notice, the vague guesses of that noble Greek had met with confirmation in the late nebular cosmogony, I felt that you could not avoid casting your eyes upward to the great *nebula* in Orion, and I certainly expected that you would do so. You did look up; and I was now assured that I had correctly followed your steps. But in that bitter *tirade* upon Chantilly, which ap-

peared in yesterday's *Musée,* the satirist making some disgraceful allusions to the cobbler's change of name upon assuming the buskin, quoted a Latin line about which we have often conversed. I mean the line—

Perdidit antiquum litera prima sonum.

I had told you that this was in reference to Orion, formerly written Urion, and from certain pungencies connected with this explanation I was aware that you could not have forgotten it. It was clear, therefore, that you would not fail to combine the two ideas of Orion and Chantilly. That you did combine them I saw by the character of the smile which passed over your lips. You thought of the poor cobbler's immolation. So far you had been stooping in your gait, but now I saw you draw yourself up to your full height. I was then sure that you reflected upon the diminutive figure of Chantilly. At this point I interrupted your meditations to remark that as, in fact, he *was* a very little fellow that Chantilly, he would do better at the *Théâtre des Variétés.*"

Not long after this we were looking over an evening edition of the *Gazette des Tribunaux,* when the following paragraphs arrested our attention.

"EXTRAORDINARY MURDERS.—This morning about three o'clock the inhabitants of the Quartier St. Roch were aroused from sleep by a succession of terrific shrieks, issuing, apparently, from the fourth story of a house in the Rue Morgue, known to be in the sole occupancy of one Madame L'Espanaye, and her daughter, Mademoiselle Camille L'Espanaye. After some delay, occasioned by a fruitless attempt to procure admission in the usual manner, the gateway was broken in with a crowbar, and eight or ten of the neighbors entered, accompanied by two *gendarmes.* By this time the cries had ceased, but as the party rushed up the first flight of stairs, two or more rough voices in angry contention were distinguished, and seemed to proceed from the upper part of the house. As the second landing was reached these sounds also had ceased, and everything remained perfectly quiet. The party spread themselves and hurried from room to room. Upon arriving at a large back chamber in the fourth story (the door of which, being found locked with the key inside, was forced open), a spectacle presented itself which struck every one present not less with horror than with astonishment.

"The apartment was in the wildest disorder, the furniture

broken and thrown about in all directions. There was only one bedstead, and from this the bed had been removed and thrown into the middle of the floor. On a chair lay a razor besmeared with blood. On the hearth were two or three long and thick tresses of gray human hair, also dabbled in blood, and seeming to have been pulled out by the roots. Upon the floor were found four Napoleons, an earring of topaz, three large silver spoons, three smaller of *métal d'Alger*, and two bags containing nearly four thousand francs in gold. The drawers of a *bureau* which stood in one corner were open, and had been apparently rifled, although many articles still remained in them. A small iron safe was discovered under the *bed* (not under the bedstead). It was open, with the key still in the door. It had no contents beyond a few old letters and other papers of little consequence.

"Of Madame L'Espanaye no traces were here seen, but an unusual quantity of soot being observed in the fireplace, a search was made in the chimney, and (horrible to relate!) the corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged therefrom, it having been thus forced up the narrow aperture for a considerable distance. The body was quite warm. Upon examining it many excoriations were perceived, no doubt occasioned by the violence with which it had been thrust up and disengaged. Upon the face were many severe scratches, and upon the throat, dark bruises and deep indentations of finger-nails, as if the deceased had been throttled to death.

"After a thorough investigation of every portion of the house, without further discovery, the party made its way into a small paved yard in the rear of the building, where lay the corpse of the old lady, with her throat so entirely cut that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off. The body as well as the head was fearfully mutilated, the former so much so as scarcely to retain any semblance of humanity.

"To this horrible mystery there is not as yet, we believe, the slightest clue."

The next day's paper had these additional particulars:

"The Tragedy in the Rue Morgue.—Many individuals have been examined in relation to this most extraordinary and frightful affair" [the word "*affaire*" has not yet in France that levity of import which it conveys with us], "but nothing whatever has transpired to throw light upon it. We give below all the material testimony elicited.

"*Pauline Dubourg*, laundress, deposes that she has known

both the deceased for three years, having washed for them during that period. The old lady and her daughter seemed on good terms—very affectionate towards each other. They were excellent pay. Could not speak in regard to their mode or means of living. Believed that Madame L. told fortunes for a living. Was reputed to have money put by. Never met any persons in the house when she called for the clothes or took them home. Was sure that they had no servant in employ. There appeared to be no furniture in any part of the building except in the fourth story.

"*Pierre Moreau,* tobacconist, deposes that he has been in the habit of selling small quantities of tobacco and snuff to Madame L'Espanaye for nearly four years. Was born in the neighborhood, and has always resided there. The deceased and her daughter had occupied the house in which the corpses were found for more than six years. It was formerly occupied by a jeweller, who underlet the upper rooms to various persons. The house was the property of Madame L. She became dissatisfied with the abuse of the premises by her tenant, and moved into them herself, refusing to let any portion. The old lady was childish. Witness had seen the daughter some five or six times during the six years. The two lived an exceedingly retired life—were reputed to have money. Had heard it said among the neighbors that Madame L. told fortunes—did not believe it. Had never seen any person enter the door except the old lady and her daughter, a porter once or twice, and a physician some eight or ten times.

"Many other persons, neighbors, gave evidence to the same effect. No one was spoken of as frequenting the house. It was not known whether there were any living connections of Madame L. and her daughter. The shutters of the front windows were seldom opened. Those in the rear were always closed with the exception of the large back room, fourth story. The house was a good house, not very old.

"*Isidore Muset, gendarme,* deposes that he was called to the house about three o'clock in the morning, and found some twenty or thirty persons at the gateway endeavoring to gain admittance. Forced it open at length with a bayonet—not with a crowbar. Had but little difficulty in getting it open on account of its being a double or folding gate, and bolted neither at bottom nor top. The shrieks were continued until the gate was forced, and then suddenly ceased. They seemed to be screams of

some person (or persons) in great agony, were loud and drawn out, not short and quick. Witness led the way upstairs. Upon reaching the first landing, heard two voices in loud and angry contention—the one a gruff voice, the other much shriller—a very strange voice. Could distinguish some words of the former, which was that of a Frenchman. Was positive that it was not a woman's voice. Could distinguish the words *'sacré'* and *'diable.'* The shrill voice was that of a foreigner. Could not be sure whether it was the voice of a man or of a woman. Could not make out what was said, but believed the language to be Spanish. The state of the room and of the bodies was described by this witness as we described them yesterday.

"*Henri Duval,* a neighbor, and by trade a silversmith, deposes that he was one of the party who first entered the house. Corroborates the testimony of Muset in general. As soon as they forced an entrance, they reclosed the door to keep out the crowd, which collected very fast, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour. The shrill voice, this witness thinks, was that of an Italian. Was certain it was not French. Could not be sure that it was a man's voice. It might have been a woman's. Was not acquainted with the Italian language. Could not distinguish the words, but was convinced by the intonation that the speaker was an Italian. Knew Madame L. and her daughter. Had conversed with both frequently. Was sure that the shrill voice was not that of either of the deceased.

"—— *Odenheimer, restaurateur.*—This witness volunteered his testimony. Not speaking French, was examined through an interpreter. Is a native of Amsterdam. Was passing the house at the time of the shrieks. They lasted for several minutes—probably ten. They were long and loud—very awful and distressing. Was one of those who entered the building. Corroborated the previous evidence in every respect but one. Was sure that the shrill voice was that of a man—of a Frenchman. Could not distinguish the words uttered. They were loud and quick—unequal—spoken apparently in fear as well as in anger. The voice was harsh—not so much shrill as harsh. Could not call it a shrill voice. The gruff voice said repeatedly *'sacré,' 'diable,'* and once *'mon Dieu.'*

"*Jules Mignaud,* banker, of the firm of Mignaud et Fils, Rue Deloraine. Is the elder Mignaud. Madame L'Espanaye had some property. Had opened an account with his banking house in the spring of the year—(eight years previously). Made fre-

quent deposits in small sums. Had checked for nothing until the third day before her death, when she took out in person the sum of 4000 francs. This sum was paid in gold, and a clerk sent home with the money.

"*Adolphe Lebon,* clerk to Mignaud et Fils, deposes that on the day in question, about noon, he accompanied Madame L'Espanaye to her residence with the 4000 francs, put up in two bags. Upon the door being opened, Mademoiselle L. appeared and took from his hands one of the bags, while the old lady relieved him of the other. He then bowed and departed. Did not see any person in the street at the time. It is a bye-street—very lonely.

"*William Bird,* tailor, deposes that he was one of the party who entered the house. Is an Englishman. Has lived in Paris two years. Was one of the first to ascend the stairs. Heard the voices in contention. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Could make out several words, but cannot now remember all. Heard distinctly '*sacré*' and '*mon Dieu.*' There was a sound at the moment as if of several persons struggling—a scraping and scuffling sound. The shrill voice was very loud—louder than the gruff one. Is sure that it was not the voice of an Englishman. Appeared to be that of a German. Might have been a woman's voice. Does not understand German.

"Four of the above-named witnesses, being recalled, deposed that the door of the chamber in which was found the body of Mademoiselle L. was locked on the inside when the party reached it. Everything was perfectly silent—no groans or noises of any kind. Upon forcing the door no person was seen. The windows, both of the back and front room, were down and firmly fastened from within. A door between the two rooms was closed, but not locked. The door leading from the front room into the passage was locked, with the key on the inside. A small room in the front of the house, on the fourth story, at the head of the passage, was open, the door being ajar. This room was crowded with old beds, boxes, and so forth. These were carefully removed and searched. There was not an inch of any portion of the house which was not carefuly searched. Sweeps were sent up and down the chimneys. The house was a four-story one, with garrets (*mansardes*). A trap-door on the roof was nailed down very securely—did not appear to have been opened for years. The time elapsing between the hearing of the voices in contention and the breaking open of the room door was variously

stated by the witnesses. Some made it as short as three minutes —some as long as five. The door was opened with difficulty.

"*Alfonzo Garcio,* undertaker, deposes that he resides in the Rue Morgue. Is a native of Spain. Was one of the party who entered the house. Did not proceed upstairs. Is nervous, and was apprehensive of the consequences of the agitation. Heard the voices in contention. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Could not distinguish what was said. The shrill voice was that of an Englishman—is sure of this. Does not understand the English language, but judges by the intonation.

"*Alberto Montani,* confectioner, deposes that he was among the first to ascend the stairs. Heard the voices in question. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Distinguished several words. The speaker appeared to be expostulating. Could not make out the words of the shrill voice. Spoke quick and unevenly. Thinks it the voice of a Russian. Corroborates the general testimony. Is an Italian. Never conversed with a native of Russia.

"Several witnesses, recalled, here testified that the chimneys of all the rooms on the fourth story were too narrow to admit the passage of a human being. By 'sweeps' were meant cylindrical sweeping-brushes, such as are employed by those who clean chimneys. These brushes were passed up and down every flue in the house. There is no back passage by which any one could have descended while the party proceeded upstairs. The body of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye was so firmly wedged in the chimney that it could not be got down until four or five of the party united their strength.

"*Paul Dumas,* physician, deposes that he was called to view the bodies about daybreak. They were both then lying on the sacking of the bedstead in the chamber where Mademoiselle L. was found. The corpse of the young lady was much bruised and excoriated. The fact that it had been thrust up the chimney would sufficiently account for these appearances. The throat was greatly chafed. There were several deep scratches just below the chin, together with a series of livid spots which were evidently the impression of fingers. The face was fearfully discolored, and the eye-balls protruded. The tongue had been partially bitten through. A large bruise was discovered upon the pit of the stomach, produced apparently by the pressure of a knee. In the opinion of M. Dumas, Mademoiselle L'Espanaye had been throttled to death by some person or persons unknown.

The corpse of the mother was horribly mutilated. All the bones of the right leg and arm were more or less shattered. The left *tibia* much splintered, as well as all the ribs of the left side. Whole body dreadfully bruised and discolored. It was not possible to say how the injuries had been inflicted. A heavy club of wood, or a broad bar of iron—a chair—any large, heavy, and obtuse weapon would have produced such results if wielded by the hands of a very powerful man. No woman could have inflicted the blows with any weapon. The head of the deceased, when seen by witness, was entirely separated from the body, and was also greatly shattered. The throat had evidently been cut with some very sharp instrument—probably with a razor.

"*Alexandre Etienne,* surgeon, was called with M. Dumas to view the bodies. Corroborated the testimony, and the opinions of M. Dumas.

"Nothing further of importance was elicited, although several other persons were examined. A murder so mysterious, and so perplexing in all its particulars, was never before committed in Paris—if indeed a murder has been committed at all. The police are entirely at fault—an unusual occurrence in affairs of this nature. There is not, however, the shadow of a clue apparent."

The evening edition of the paper stated that the greatest excitement still continued in the Quartier St. Roch—that the premises in question had been carefully re-searched, and fresh examinations of witnesses instituted, but all to no purpose. A postscript, however, mentioned that Adolphe Lebon had been arrested and imprisoned—although nothing appeared to criminate him beyond the facts already detailed.

Dupin seemed singularly interested in the progress of this affair—at least so I judged from his manner, for he made no comments. It was only after the announcement that Lebon had been imprisoned that he asked me my opinion respecting the murders.

I could merely agree with all Paris in considering them an insoluble mystery. I saw no means by which it would be possible to trace the murderer.

"We must not judge of the means," said Dupin, "by this shell of an examination. The Parisian police, so much extolled for *acumen,* are cunning, but no more. There is no method in their proceedings, beyond the method of the moment. They make a vast parade of measures; but, not unfrequently, these are so ill-

adapted to the objects proposed as to put us in mind of Monsieur Jourdain's calling for his *robe-de-chambre—pour mieux entendre la musique.* The results attained by them are not unfrequently surprising, but for the most part are brought about by simple diligence and activity. When these qualities are unavailing, their schemes fail. Vidocq, for example, was a good guesser, and a persevering man. But, without educated thought, he erred continually by the very intensity of his investigations. He impaired his vision by holding the object too close. He might see, perhaps, one or two points with unusual clearness, but in so doing, he necessarily lost sight of the matter as a whole. Thus there is such a thing as being too profound. Truth is not always in a well. In fact, as regards the more important knowledge, I do believe that she is invariably superficial. The truth lies not in the valleys where we seek her, but upon the mountain-tops where she is found. The modes and sources of this kind of error are well typified in the contemplation of the heavenly bodies. To look at a star by glances—to view it in a side-long way, by turning towards it the exterior portions of the *retina* (more susceptible of feeble impressions of light than the interior), is to behold the star distinctly—is to have the best appreciation of its luster—a luster which grows dim just in proportion as we turn our vision *fully* upon it. A greater number of rays actually fall upon the eye in the latter case, but in the former there is the more refined capacity for comprehension. By undue profundity we perplex and enfeeble thought; and it is possible to make even Venus herself vanish from the firmament by a scrutiny too sustained, too concentrated, or too direct.

"As for these murders, let us enter into some examinations for ourselves before we make up an opinion respecting them. An inquiry will afford us amusement" [I thought this an odd term so applied, but said nothing], "and besides, Lebon once rendered me a service for which I am not ungrateful. We will go and see the premises with our own eyes. I know G——, the Prefect of Police, and shall have no difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission."

The permission was obtained, and we proceeded at once to the Rue Morgue. This is one of those miserable thoroughfares which intervene between the Rue Richelieu and the Rue St. Roch. It was late in the afternoon when we reached it, as this quarter is at a great distance from that in which we resided. The house was readily found; for there were still many persons

gazing up at the closed shutters, with an objectless curiosity, from the opposite side of the way. It was an ordinary Parisian house, with a gateway, on one side of which was a glazed watch-box, with a sliding panel in the window, indicating a *loge du concierge.* Before going in we walked up the street, turned down an alley, and then, again turning, passed in the rear of the building—Dupin, meanwhile, examining the whole neighborhood, as well as the house, with a minuteness of attention for which I could see no possible object.

Retracing our steps, we came again to the front of the dwelling, rang, and, having shown our credentials, were admitted by the agents in charge. We went upstairs—into the chamber where the body of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye had been found, and where both the deceased still lay. The disorders of the room had, as usual, been suffered to exist. I saw nothing beyond what had been stated in the *Gazette des Tribunaux.* Dupin scrutinized everything, not excepting the bodies of the victims. We then went into the other rooms, and into the yard; a *gendarme* accompanying us throughout. The examination occupied us until dark, when we took our departure. On our way home my companion stepped in for a moment at the office of one of the daily papers.

I have said that the whims of my friend were manifold, and that *je les ménageais*—for this phrase there is no English equivalent. It was his humor now to decline all conversation on the subject of the murder, until about noon the next day. He then asked me suddenly, if I had observed anything *peculiar* at the scene of the atrocity.

There was something in his manner of emphasizing the word "peculiar," which caused me to shudder, without knowing why.

"No, nothing *peculiar,*" I said; "nothing more, at least, than we both saw stated in the paper."

"The *Gazette,*" he replied, "has not entered, I fear, into the unusual horror of the thing. But dismiss the idle opinions of this print. It appears to me that this mystery is considered insoluble for the very reason which should cause it to be regarded as easy of solution—I mean for the *outré* character of its features. The police are confounded by the seeming absence of motive—not for the murder itself, but for the atrocity of the murder. They are puzzled, too, by the seeming impossibility of reconciling the voices heard in contention, with the facts that no one was discovered upstairs but the assassinated Mademoiselle L'Espa-

naye, and that there were no means of egress without the notice of the party ascending. The wild disorder of the room; the corpse thrust, with the head downward, up the chimney; the frightful mutilation of the body of the old lady; these considerations, with those just mentioned, and others which I need not mention, have sufficed to paralyze the powers, by putting completely at fault the boasted *acumen* of the government agents. They have fallen into the gross but common error of confounding the unusual with the abstruse. But it is by these deviations from the plane of the ordinary that reason feels its way, if at all, in its search for the true. In investigations such as we are now pursuing it should not be so much asked 'what has occurred,' as 'what has occurred that has never occurred before.' In fact, the facility with which I shall arrive, or have arrived at the solution of this mystery, is in the direct ratio of its apparant insolubility in the eyes of the police."

I stared at the speaker in mute astonishment.

"I am now waiting," continued he, looking toward the door of our apartment—"I am now awaiting a person who, although perhaps not the perpetrator of these butcheries, must have been in some measure implicated in their perpetration. Of the worst portion of the crimes committed, it is probable that he is innocent. I hope that I am right in this supposition; for upon it I build my expectation of reading the entire riddle. I look for the man here—in this room—every moment. It is true that he may not arrive; but the probability is that he will. Should he come it will be necessary to detain him. Here are pistols; and we both know how to use them when occasion demands their use."

I took the pistols, scarcely knowing what I did, or believing what I heard, while Dupin went on, very much as if in a soliloquy. I have already spoken of his abstract manner at such times. His discourse was addressed to myself; but his voice, although by no means loud, had that intonation which is commonly employed in speaking to some one at a great distance. His eyes, vacant in expression, regarded only the wall.

"That the voices heard in contention," he said, "by the party upon the stairs, were not the voices of the women themselves, was fully proved by the evidence. This relieves us of all doubt upon the question whether the old lady could have first destroyed the daughter, and afterwards have committed suicide. I speak of this point chiefly for the sake of method; for the strength of Madame L'Espanaye would have been utterly un-

equal to the task of thrusting her daughter's corpse up the chimney as it was found; and the nature of the wounds upon her own person entirely preclude the idea of self-destruction. Murder, then, has been committed by some third party; and the voices of this third party were those heard in contention. Let me now advert—not to the whole testimony respecting these voices—but to what was *peculiar* in that testimony. Did you observe anything peculiar about it?"

I remarked that, while all the witnesses agreed in supposing the gruff voice to be that of a Frenchman, there was much disagreement in regard to the shrill, or, as one individual termed it, the harsh voice.

"That was the evidence itself," said Dupin, "but it was not the peculiarity of the evidence. You have observed nothing distinctive. Yet there *was* something to be observed. The witnesses, as you remark, agreed about the gruff voice; they were here unanimous. But in regard to the shrill voice, the peculiarity is—not that they disagreed—but that, while an Italian, an Englishman, a Spaniard, a Hollander, and a Frenchman attempted to describe it, each one spoke of it as that *of a foreigner.* Each is sure that it was not the voice of one of his own countrymen. Each likens it—not to the voice of an individual of any nation with whose language he is conversant—but the converse. The Frenchman supposes it the voice of a Spaniard, and 'might have distinguished some words *had he been acquainted with the Spanish.*' The Dutchman maintains it to have been that of a Frenchman; but we find it stated that '*not understanding French, this witness was examined through an interpreter.*' The Englishman thinks it the voice of a German, and '*does not understand German.*' The Spaniard 'is sure' that it was that of an Englishman, but 'judges by the intonation' altogether, '*as he had no knowledge of the English.*' The Italian believes it the voice of a Russian, but '*has never conversed with a native of Russia.*' A second Frenchman differs, moreover, with the first, and is positive that the voice was that of an Italian; but, *not being cognizant of that tongue,* is, like the Spaniard, 'convinced by the intonation.' Now, how strangely unusual must that voice have really been, about which such testimony as this *could* have been elicited!—in whose *tones,* even, denizens of the five great divisions of Europe could recognize nothing familiar! You will say that it might have been the voice of an Asiatic—of an African. Neither Asiatics nor Africans abound in Paris; but,

without denying the inference, I will now merely call your attention to three points. The voice is termed by one witness 'harsh rather than shrill.' It is represented by two others to have been 'quick and *unequal*.' No words—no sounds resembling words—were by any witness mentioned as distinguishable.

"I know not," continued Dupin, "what impression I may have made, so far, upon your own understanding, but I do not hesitate to say that legitimate deductions even from this portion of the testimony—the portion respecting the gruff and shrill voices—are in themselves sufficient to engender a suspicion which should give direction to all further progress in the investigation of the mystery. I said 'legitimate deductions,' but my meaning is not thus fully expressed. I designed to imply that the deductions are the *sole* proper ones, and that the suspicion arises *inevitably* from them as the single result. What the suspicion is, however, I will not say just yet. I merely wish you to bear in mind that, with myself, it was sufficiently forcible to give a definite form—a certain tendency—to my inquiries in the chamber.

"Let us now transport ourselves, in fancy, to this chamber. What shall we first seek here? The means of egress employed by the murderers. It is not too much to say that neither of us believe in preternatural events. Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye were not destroyed by spirits. The doers of the deed were material, and escaped materially. Then how? Fortunately there is but one mode of reasoning upon the point, and that mode *must* lead us to a definite decision. Let us examine, each by each, the possible means of egress. It is clear that the assassins were in the room where Mademoiselle L'Espanaye was found, or at least in the room adjoining, when the party ascended the stairs. It is then only from these two apartments that we have to seek issues. The police have laid bare the floors, the ceilings, and the masonry of the walls in every direction. No *secret* issues could have escaped their vigilance. But, not trusting to *their* eyes, I examined with my own. There were, then, *no* secret issues. Both doors leading from the rooms into the passage were securely locked, with the keys inside. Let us turn to the chimneys. These, although of ordinary width for some eight or ten feet above the hearths, will not admit, throughout their extent, the body of a large cat. The impossibility of egress, by means already stated, being thus absolute, we are reduced to the windows. Through those of the front room no one could

have escaped without notice from the crowd in the street. The murderers *must* have passed, then, through those of the back room. Now, brought to this conclusion in so unequivocal a manner as we are, it is not our part, as reasoners, to reject it on account of apparent impossibilities. It is only left for us to prove that these apparent 'impossibilities' are, in reality, not such.

"There are two windows in the chamber. One of them is unobstructed by furniture, and is wholly visible. The lower portion of the other is hidden from view by the head of the unwieldy bedstead which is thrust close up against it. The former was found securely fastened from within. It resisted the utmost force of those who endeavored to raise it. A large gimlet-hole had been pierced in its frame to the left, and a very stout nail was found fitted therein, nearly to the head. Upon examining the other window a similar nail was seen similarly fitted in it; and a vigorous attempt to raise this sash failed also. The police were now entirely satisfied that egress had not been in these directions. And, *therefore,* it was thought a matter of supererogation to withdraw the nails and open the windows.

"My own examination was somewhat more particular, and was so for the reason I have just given—because here it was, I knew, that all apparent impossibilities *must* be proved to be not such in reality.

"I proceeded to think thus—*à posteriori.* The murderers *did* escape from one of these windows. This being so, they could not have re-fastened the sashes from the inside, as they were found fastened—the consideration which puts a stop, through its obviousness, to the scrutiny of the police in this quarter. Yet the sashes *were* fastened. They *must,* then, have the power of fastening themselves. There was no escape from this conclusion. I stepped to the unobstructed casement, withdrew the nail with some difficulty, and attempted to raise the sash. It resisted all my efforts, as I had anticipated. A concealed spring must, I now knew, exist; and this corroboration of my idea convinced me that my premises, at least, were correct, however mysterious still appeared the circumstances attending the nails. A careful search soon brought to light the hidden spring. I pressed it, and, satisfied with the discovery, forbore to upraise the sash.

"I now replaced the nail and regarded it attentively. A person passing out through this window might have reclosed it, and the spring would have caught; but the nail could not have been replaced. The conclusion was plain, and again narrowed in

the field of my investigations. The assassins *must* have escaped through the other window. Supposing, then, the springs upon each sash to be the same, as was probable, there *must* be found a difference between the nails, or at least between the modes of their fixture. Getting upon the sacking of the bedstead, I looked over the head-board minutely at the second casement. Passing my hand down behind the board, I readily discovered and pressed the spring, which was, as I had supposed, identical in character with its neighbor. I now looked at the nail. It was as stout as the other, and apparently fitted in the same manner, driven in nearly up to the head.

"You will say that I was puzzled; but if you think so you must have misunderstood the nature of the inductions. To use a sporting phrase, I had not been once 'at fault.' The scent had never for an instant been lost. There was no flaw in any link of the chain. I had traced the secret to its ultimate result; and that result was *the nail.* It had, I say, in every respect the appearance of its fellow in the other window; but this fact was an absolute nullity (conclusive as it might seem to be) when compared with the consideration that here at this point terminated the clue. 'There *must* be something wrong,' I said, 'about the nail.' I touched it, and the head, with about a quarter of an inch of the shank, came off in my fingers. The rest of the shank was in the gimlet-hole, where it had been broken off. The fracture was an old one (for its edges were incrusted with rust) and had apparently been accomplished by the blow of a hammer, which had partially imbedded in the top of the bottom sash the head portion of the nail. I now carefully replaced this head portion in the indentation whence I had taken it, and the resemblance to a perfect nail was complete—the fissure was invisible. Pressing the spring, I gently raised the sash for a few inches; the head went up with it, remaining firm in its bed. I closed the window, and the semblance of the whole nail was again perfect.

"The riddle, so far, was now unriddled. The assassin had escaped through the window which looked upon the bed. Dropping of its own accord upon his exit (or perhaps purposely closed), it had become fastened by the spring; and it was the retention of this spring which had been mistaken by the police for that of the nail,—further inquiry being thus considered unnecessary.

"The next question is that of the mode of descent. Upon this point I had been satisfied in my walk with you around the

building. About five feet and a half from the casement in question there runs a lightning-rod. From this rod it would have been impossible for any one to reach the window itself, to say nothing of entering it. I observed, however, that the shutters of the fourth story were of the peculiar kind called by Parisian carpenters *ferrades*—a kind rarely employed at the present day, but frequently seen upon very old mansions at Lyons and Bordeaux. They are in the form of an ordinary door (a single, not a folding door), except that the lower half is latticed or worked in open trellis, thus affording an excellent hold for the hands. In the present instance these shutters are fully three feet and a half broad. When we saw them from the rear of the house they were both about half open—that is to say, they stood off at right angles from the wall. It is probable that the police, as well as myself, examined the back of the tenement; but if so, in looking at these *ferrades* in the line of their breadth (as they must have done), they did not perceive this great breadth itself, or, at all events, failed to take it into due consideration. In fact, having once satisfied themselves that no egress could have been made in this quarter, they would naturally bestow here a very cursory examination. It was clear to me, however, that the shutter belonging to the window at the head of the bed would, if swung fully back to the wall, reach to within two feet of the lightning-rod. It was also evident that by exertion of a very unusual degree of activity and courage an entrance into the window from the rod might have been thus effected. By reaching to the distance of two feet and a half (we now suppose the shutter open to its whole extent) a robber might have taken a firm grasp upon the trellis-work. Letting go, then, his hold upon the rod, placing his feet securely against the wall, and springing boldly from it, he might have swung the shutter so as to close it, and, if we imagine the window open at the time, might even have swung himself into the room.

"I wish you to bear especially in mind that I have spoken of a *very* unusual degree of activity as requisite to success in so hazardous and so difficult a feat. It is my design to show you, first, that the thing might possibly have been accomplished; but, secondly and *chiefly,* I wish to impress upon your understanding the *very extraordinary,* the almost preternatural, character of that agility which could have accomplished it.

"You will say, no doubt, using the language of the law, that 'to make out my case' I should rather undervalue than insist

upon a full estimation of the activity required in this matter. This may be the practise in law, but it is not the usage of reason. My ultimate object is only the truth. My immediate purpose is to lead you to place in juxtaposition that *very unusual* activity of which I have just spoken with that *very peculiar* shrill (or harsh) and *unequal* voice, about whose nationality no two persons could be found to agree, and in whose utterances no syllabification could be detected."

At these words a vague and half-formed conception of the meaning of Dupin flitted over my mind. I seemed to be upon the verge of comprehension, without power to comprehend, as men at times find themselves upon the brink of remembrance, without being able in the end to remember. My friend went on with his discourse.

"You will see," he said, "that I have shifted the question from the mode of egress to that of ingress. It was my design to convey the idea that both were effected in the same manner at the same point. Let us now revert to the interior of the room. Let us survey the appearances here. The drawers of the bureau, it is said, had been rifled, although many articles of apparel still remained within them. The conclusion here is absurd. It is a mere guess—a very silly one—and no more. How are we to know that the articles found in the drawers were not all these drawers had originally contained? Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter lived an exceedingly retired life—saw no company—seldom went out—had little use for numerous changes of habiliment. Those found were at least of as good quality as any likely to be possessed by these ladies. If a thief had taken any, why did he not take the best—why did he not take all? In a word, why did he abandon four thousand francs in gold to encumber himself with a bundle of linen? The gold *was* abandoned. Nearly the whole sum mentioned by Monsieur Mignaud, the banker, was discovered in bags upon the floor. I wish you, therefore, to discard from your thoughts the blundering idea of *motive,* engendered in the brains of the police by that portion of the evidence which speaks of money delivered at the door of the house. Coincidences ten times as remarkable as this (the delivery of the money, and murder committed within three days upon the party receiving it), happen to all of us every hour of our lives, without attracting even momentary notice. Coincidences, in general, are great stumbling-blocks in the way of that class of thinkers who have been educated to know nothing

of the theory of probabilities—that theory to which the most glorious objects of human research are indebted for the most glorious of illustration. In the present instance, had the gold been gone, the fact of its delivery three days before would have formed something more than a coincidence. It would have been corroborative of this idea of motive. But, under the real circumstances of the case, if we are to suppose gold the motive of this outrage, we must also imagine the perpetrator so vacillating an idiot as to have abandoned his gold and his motive together.

"Keeping now steadily in mind the points to which I have drawn your attention—that peculiar voice, that unusual agility, and that startling absence of motive in a murder so singularly atrocious as this—let us glance at the butchery itself. Here is a woman strangled to death by manual strength, and thrust up a chimney, head downward. Ordinary assassins employ no such modes of murder as this. Least of all do they dispose of the murdered. In the manner of thrusting the corpse up the chimney, you will admit that there was something *excessively outré*—something altogether irreconcilable with our common notions of human action, even when we suppose the actors the most depraved of men. Think, too, how great must have been that strength which could have thrust the body *up* such an aperture so forcibly that the united vigor of several persons was found barely sufficient to drag it *down!*

"Turn, now, to other indications of the employment of a vigor most marvelous. On the hearth were thick tresses—very thick tresses—of gray human hair. These had been torn out by the roots. You are aware of the great force necessary in tearing thus from the head even twenty or thirty hairs together. You saw the locks in question as well as myself. Their roots (a hideous sight!) were clotted with fragments of the flesh of the scalp—sure token of the prodigious power which had been exerted in uprooting perhaps half-a-million of hairs at a time. The throat of the old lady was not merely cut, but the head absolutely severed from the body—the instrument was a mere razor. I wish you also to look at the *brutal* ferocity of these deeds. Of the bruises upon the body of Madame L'Espanaye I do not speak. Monsieur Dumas, and his worthy coadjutor, Monsieur Etienne, have pronounced that they were inflicted by some obtuse instrument; and so far these gentlemen are very correct. The obtuse instrument was clearly the stone pavement in the yard upon which the victim had fallen from the window

which looked in upon the bed. This idea, however simple it may now seem, escaped the police for the same reason that the breadth of the shutters escaped them—because, by the affair of the nails, their perceptions had been hermetically sealed against the possibility of the windows having ever been opened at all.

"If, now, in addition to all these things, you have properly reflected upon the odd disorder of the chamber, we have gone so far as to combine the ideas of an agility astounding, a strength superhuman, a ferocity brutal, a butchery without motive, a *grotesquerie* in horror absolutely alien from humanity, and a voice foreign in tone to the ears of men of many nations, and devoid of all distinct or intelligible syllabification. What result, then, has ensued? What impression have I made upon your fancy?"

I felt a creeping of the flesh as Dupin asked me the question. "A madman," I said, "has done this deed—some raving maniac escaped from a neighboring *maison de santé*."

"In some respects," he replied, "your idea is not irrelevant; but the voices of madmen, even in their wildest paroxysms, are never found to tally with that peculiar voice heard upon the stairs. Madmen are of some nation, and their language, however incoherent in its words, has always the coherence of syllabification. Besides, the hair of a madman is not such as I now hold in my hand. I disentangled this little tuft from the rigidly clutched fingers of Madame L'Espanaye. Tell me what you can make of it?"

"Dupin!" I said, completely unnerved, "this hair is most unusual—this is no *human* hair."

"I have not asserted that it is," said he; "but, before we decide this point, I wish you to glance at the little sketch I have here traced upon this paper. It is a *facsimile* drawing of what has been described in one portion of the testimony as 'dark bruises, and deep indentations of finger-nails,' upon the throat of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye, and in another (by Messrs. Dumas and Etienne), as a 'series of livid spots evidently the impression of fingers.'

"You will perceive," continued my friend, spreading out the paper upon the table before us, "that this drawing gives the idea of a firm and fixed hold. There is no *slipping* apparent. Each finger has retained—possibly until the death of the victim—the fearful grasp by which it originally imbedded itself. Attempt,

now, to place all your fingers, at the same time, in the respective impressions as you see them."

I made the attempt in vain.

"We are possibly not giving this matter a fair trial," he said. "The paper is spread out upon a plane surface; but the human throat is cylindrical. Here is a billet of wood, the circumference of which is about that of the throat. Wrap the drawing around it, and try the experiment again."

I did so; but the difficulty was even more obvious than before. "This," I said, "is the mark of no human hand."

"Read now," replied Dupin, "this passage from Cuvier."

It was a minute anatomical and generally descriptive account of the large fulvous Ourang-outang of the East Indian Islands. The gigantic stature, the prodigious strength and activity, the wild ferocity, and the imitative propensities of these mammalia are sufficiently well known to all. I understood the full horrors of the murder at once.

"The description of the digits," said I, as I made an end of reading, "is in exact accordance with this drawing. I see that no animal but an Ourang-outang, of the species here mentioned, could have impressed the indentations as you have traced them. This tuft of tawny hair, too, is identical in character with that of the beast of Cuvier. But I cannot possibly comprehend the particulars of this frightful mystery. Besides, there were *two* voices heard in contention, and one of them was unquestionably the voice of a Frenchman."

"True; and you will remember an expression attributed almost unanimously, by the evidence, to this voice,—the expression '*Mon Dieu!*' This, under the circumstances, has been justly characterized by one of the witnesses (Montani, the confectioner) as an expression of remonstrance or expostulation. Upon these two words, therefore, I have mainly built my hopes of a full solution of the riddle. A Frenchman was cognizant of the murder. It is possible—indeed it is far more than probable—that he was innocent of all participation in the bloody transactions which took place. The Ourang-outang may have escaped from him. He may have traced it to the chamber; but, under the agitating circumstances which ensued, he could never have recaptured it. It is still at large. I will not pursue these guesses —for I have no right to call them more—since the shades of reflection upon which they are based are scarcely of sufficient depth to be appreciable by my own intellect, and since I could not

pretend to make them intelligible to the understanding of another. We will call them guesses, then, and speak of them as such. If the Frenchman in question is indeed, as I suppose, innocent of this atrocity, this advertisement which I left last night upon our return home at the office of *Le Monde* (a paper devoted to the shipping interest, and much sought by sailors) will bring him to our residence."

He handed me a paper, and I read thus:

CAUGHT.—*In the Bois de Boulogne, early in the morning of the —— inst.* (the morning of the murder), *a very large, tawny Ourang-outang of the Bornese species. The owner* (*who is ascertained to be a sailor, belonging to a Maltese vessel*) *may have the animal again, upon identifying it satisfactorily, and paying a few charges arising from its capture and keeping. Call at No. —, Rue ——, Faubourg St. Germain—au troisième.*"

"How was it possible," I asked, "that you should know the man to be a sailor, and belonging to a Maltese vessel?"

"I do *not* know it," said Dupin. "I am not *sure* of it. Here, however, is a small piece of ribbon, which from its form, and from its greasy appearance, has evidently been used in tying the hair in one of those long *queues* of which sailors are so fond. Moreover, this knot is one which few besides sailors can tie, and is peculiar to the Maltese. I picked the ribbon up at the foot of the lightning-rod. It could not have belonged to either of the deceased. Now if, after all, I am wrong in my induction from this ribbon, that the Frenchman was a sailor belonging to a Maltese vessel, still I can have done no harm in saying what I did in the advertisement. If I am in error, he will merely suppose that I have been misled by some circumstance into which he will not take the trouble to inquire. But if I am right, a great point is gained. Cognizant, although innocent, of the murder, the Frenchman will naturally hesitate about replying to the advertisement—about demanding the Ourang-outang. He will reason thus:—'I am innocent; I am poor; my Ourang-outang is of great value—to one in my circumstances a fortune of itself—why should I lose it through idle apprehensions of danger? Here it is, within my grasp. It was found in the Bois de Boulogne—at a vast distance from the scene of that butchery. How can it ever be suspected that a brute beast should have done the deed? The police are at fault—they have failed to procure the slightest

clue. Should they even trace the animal, it would be impossible to prove me cognizant of the murder, or to implicate me in guilt on account of that cognizance. Above all, *I am known.* The advertiser designates me as the possessor of the beast. I am not sure to what limit his knowledge may extend. Should I avoid claiming a property of so great value, which it is known that I possess, I will render the animal at least liable to suspicion. It is not my policy to attract attention either to myself or to the beast. I will answer the advertisement, get the Ourang-outang, and keep it close until this matter has blown over.'"

At this moment we heard a step upon the stairs.

"Be ready," said Dupin, "with your pistols, but neither use them nor show them until at a signal from myself."

The front door of the house had been left open, and the visitor had entered without ringing, and advanced several steps upon the staircase. Now, however, he seemed to hesitate. Presently we heard him descending. Dupin was moving quickly to the door, when we again heard him coming up. He did not turn back a second time, but stepped up with decision, and rapped at the door of our chamber.

"Come in," said Dupin, in a cheerful and hearty tone.

A man entered. He was a sailor, evidently—a tall, stout, and muscular-looking person, with a certain dare-devil expression of countenance, not altogether unprepossessing. His face, greatly sunburnt, was more than half hidden by whisker and *mustachio.* He had with him a huge oaken cudgel, but appeared to be otherwise unarmed. He bowed awkwardly, and bade us "good evening" in French accents, which, although somewhat Neufchatelish, were still sufficiently indicative of a Parisian origin.

"Sit down, my friend," said Dupin. "I suppose you have called about the Ourang-outang. Upon my word I almost envy you the possession of him; a remarkably fine, and no doubt a very valuable, animal. How old do you suppose him to be?"

The sailor drew a long breath, with the air of a man relieved of some intolerable burden, and then replied in an assured tone:

"I have no way of telling—but he can't be more than four or five years old. Have you got him here?"

"Oh no; we had no conveniences for keeping him here. He is at a livery stable in the Rue Dubourg, just by. You can get him in the morning. Of course you are prepared to identify the property?"

"To be sure I am, sir."

"I shall be sorry to part with him," said Dupin.

"I don't mean that you should be at all this trouble for nothing, sir," said the man. "Couldn't expect it. Am very willing to pay a reward for the finding of the animal—that is to say, anything in reason."

"Well," replied my friend, "that is all very fair, to be sure. Let me think!—what should I have? Oh! I will tell you. My reward shall be this. You shall give me all the information in your power about these murders in the Rue Morgue."

Dupin said the last words in a very low tone, and very quietly. Just as quietly too, he walked towards the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. He then drew a pistol from his bosom and placed it, without the least flurry, upon the table.

The sailor's face flushed up as if he were struggling with suffocation. He started to his feet and grasped his cudgel; but the next moment he fell back into his seat, trembling violently, and with the countenance of death itself. He spoke not a word. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart.

"My friend," said Dupin in a kind tone, "you are alarming yourself unnecessarily—you are indeed. We mean you no harm whatever. I pledge you the honour of a gentleman, and of a Frenchman, that we intend you no injury. I perfectly well know that you are innocent of the atrocities in the Rue Morgue. It will not do, however, to deny that you are in some measure implicated in them. From what I have already said, you must know that I have had means of information about this matter—means of which you could never have dreamed. Now the thing stands thus. You have done nothing which you could have avoided—nothing, certainly, which renders you culpable. You were not even guilty of robbery, when you might have robbed with impunity. You have nothing to conceal. You have no reason for concealment. On the other hand, you are bound by every principle of honor to confess all you know. An innocent man is now imprisoned, charged with that crime of which you can point out the perpetrator."

The sailor had recovered his presence of mind, in a great measure, while Dupin uttered these words; but his original boldness of bearing was all gone.

"So help me God," said he, after a brief pause, "I *will* tell you all I know about this affair;—but I do not expect you to believe

one-half I say—I would be a fool indeed if I did. Still I *am* innocent, and I will make a clean breast if I die for it."

What he stated was in substance this: He had lately made a voyage to the Indian Archipelago. A party, of which he formed one, landed at Borneo, and passed into the interior on an excursion of pleasure. Himself and a companion had captured the Ourang-outang. This companion dying, the animal fell into his own exclusive possession. After great trouble, occasioned by the intractable ferocity of his captive during the home voyage, he at length succeeded in lodging it safely at his own residence in Paris, where, not to attract towards himself the unpleasant curiosity of his neighbors, he kept it carefully secluded until such time as it should recover from a wound in the foot received from a splinter on board ship. His ultimate design was to sell it.

Returning home from some sailor's frolic on the night, or rather in the morning of the murder, he found the beast occupying his bedroom, into which it had broken from a closet adjoining, where it had been, as was thought, securely confined. Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking-glass attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master through the key-hole of the closet. Terrified at the sight of so dangerous a weapon in the possession of an animal so ferocious and so well able to use it, the man, for some moments, was at a loss what to do. He had been accustomed, however, to quiet the creature, even in its fiercest moods, by the use of a whip, and to this he now resorted. Upon sight of it, the Ourang-outang sprang at once through the door of the chamber, down the stairs, and thence through a window, unfortunately open, into the street.

The Frenchman followed in despair; the ape, razor still in hand, occasionally stopping to look back and gesticulate at its pursuer, until the latter had nearly come up with it. It then again made off. In this manner the chase continued for a long time. The streets were profoundly quiet, as it was nearly three o'clock in the morning. In passing down an alley in the rear of the Rue Morgue, the fugitive's attention was arrested by a light gleaming from the open window of Madame L'Espanaye's chamber, in the fourth story of her house. Rushing to the building, it perceived the lightning-rod, clambered up with inconceivable agility, grasped the shutter, which was thrown fully back against the wall, and, by its means, swung itself directly upon the head-board of the bed. The whole feat did not occupy

a minute. The shutter was kicked open again by the Ourang-outang as it entered the room.

The sailor, in the meantime, was both rejoiced and perplexed. He had strong hopes of now recapturing the brute, as he could scarcely escape from the trap into which it had ventured except by the rod, where it might be intercepted as it came down. On the other hand, there was much cause for anxiety as to what it might do in the house. This latter reflection urged the man still to follow the fugitive. A lightning-rod is ascended without difficulty, especially by a sailor; but when he had arrived as high as the window, which lay far to his left, his career was stopped; the most that he could accomplish was to reach over so as to obtain a glimpse of the interior of the room. At this glimpse he nearly fell from his hold through excess of horror. Now it was that those hideous shrieks arose upon the night which had startled from slumber the inmates of the Rue Morgue. Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter, habited in their night-clothes, had apparently been occupied in arranging some papers in the iron chest already mentioned, which had been wheeled into the middle of the room. It was open, and its contents lay beside it on the floor. The victims must have been sitting with their backs towards the window; and, from the time elapsing between the ingress of the beast and the screams, it seems probable that it was not immediately perceived. The flapping to of the shutter would naturally have been attributed to the wind.

As the sailor looked in, the gigantic animal had seized Madame L'Espanaye by the hair (which was loose as she had been combing it), and was flourishing the razor about her face in imitation of the motions of a barber. The daughter lay prostrate and motionless; she had swooned. The screams and struggles of the old lady (during which the hair was torn from her head) had the effect of changing the probably pacific purposes of the Ourang-outang into those of wrath. With one determined sweep of its muscular arm it nearly severed her head from her body. The sight of blood inflamed its anger into frenzy. Gnashing its teeth and flashing fire from its eyes, it flew upon the body of the girl, and imbedded its fearful talons in her throat, retaining its grasp until she expired. Its wandering and wild glances fell at this moment upon the head of the bed, over which the face of its master, rigid with horror, was just discernible. The fury of the beast, which no doubt bore still in mind the dreaded whip, was instantly converted into fear. Conscious of having deserved

punishment, it seemed desirous of concealing its bloody deeds, and skipped about the chamber in an agony of nervous agitation, throwing down and breaking the furniture as it moved, and dragging the bed from the bedstead. In conclusion, it seized first the corpse of the daughter and thrust it up the chimney, as it was found; then that of the old lady, which it immediately hurled through the window headlong.

As the ape approached the casement with its mutilated burden, the sailor shrank aghast to the rod, and, rather gliding than clambering down it, hurried at once home—dreading the consequences of the butchery, and gladly abandoning, in his terror, all solicitude about the fate of the Ourang-outang. The words heard by the party upon the staircase were the Frenchman's exclamations of horror and affright, commingled with the fiendish jabberings of the brute.

I have scarcely anything to add. The Ourang-outang must have escaped from the chamber by the rod, just before the breaking of the door. It must have closed the window as it passed through it. It was subsequently caught by the owner himself, who obtained for it a very large sum at the *Jardin des Plantes*. Lebon was instantly released, upon our narration of the circumstances (with some comments from Dupin) at the *bureau* of the Prefect of Police. This functionary, however well disposed to my friend, could not altogether conceal his chagrin at the turn which affairs had taken, and was fain to indulge in a sarcasm or two about the propriety of every person minding his own business.

"Let him talk," said Dupin, who had not thought it necessary to reply. "Let him discourse; it will ease his conscience. I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle. Nevertheless, that he failed in the solution of this mystery is by no means that matter for wonder which he supposes it; for, in truth, our friend the Prefect is somewhat too cunning to be profound. In his wisdom is no *stamen*. It is all head and no body, like the pictures of the Goddess Laverna,—or, at best, all head and shoulders, like a codfish. But he is a good creature after all. I like him especially for one master-stroke of cant, by which he has attained his reputation for ingenuity. I mean the way he has *'de nier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas.'*" *

* Rousseau: *Nouvelle Héloïse.*

THE BITER BIT

WILLIAM WILKIE COLLINS, *the son of William Collins, a landscape and portrait painter, was born in London on January 8, 1824. He was educated at a private school in Highbury, and after a trip to Italy with his father, became a clerk in a firm of London tea merchants. Later he studied law, and was called to the bar in 1851; but after four years of this uncongenial profession he turned definitely to literature. He had already published a two-volume "Life of William Collins" and an historical romance entitled "Antonina; or, the Fall of Rome." He met Dickens in 1851, and a close literary association and several collaborations resulted. It was in "Household Words," edited by Dickens, that Collins's "After Dark" and "The Dead Secret" first appeared. It was "The Woman in White," however, published in 1860, that firmly established his wide reputation. Collins died in 1889.*

A list of his principal literary works is as follows: "Basil: A Story of Modern Life" (1852), "Hide and Seek" (1854), "The Dead Secret" (1857), "The Woman in White" (1860), "No Name" (1862), "Armadale" (1866), "The Moonstone" (1868), "Man and Wife" (1870), "The New Magdalen" (1873), "The Frozen Deep, and Other Stories" (1874), "The Law and the Lady" (1875), "The Two Destinies" (1876), "The Fallen Leaves," (1879), "Heart and Science" (1883), "The Legacy of Cain" (1888), and "Blind Love" (1889). "The Moonstone" and "The Woman in White" represent the best and most influential work done by Collins in the field of mystery-detective fiction.

"The Biter Bit" is Brother Griffith's story told on the sixth day in "The Queen of Hearts," published in 1860; and though it has a humorous trend, it is structurally in keeping with Collins's technic of the mystery-detective story.

THE BITER BIT

By Wilkie Collins

[*Extracted from the Correspondence of the London Police.*]

FROM CHIEF INSPECTOR THEAKSTONE, OF THE DETECTIVE POLICE, TO SERGEANT BULMER OF THE SAME FORCE.

London, 4th July, 18—.

Sergeant Bulmer,

This is to inform you that you are wanted to assist in looking up a case of importance, which will require all the attention of an experienced member of the force. The matter of the robbery on which you are now engaged, you will please to shift over to the young man who brings you this letter. You will tell him all the circumstances of the case, just as they stand; you will put him up to the progress you have made (if any) towards detecting the person or persons by whom the money has been stolen; and you will leave him to make the best he can of the matter now in your hands. He is to have the whole responsibility of the case, and the whole credit of his success, if he brings it to a proper issue.

So much for the orders that I am desired to communicate to you.

A word in your ear, next, about this new man who is to take your place. His name is Matthew Sharpin; and he is to have the chance given him of dashing into our office at a jump—supposing he turns out strong enough to take it. You will naturally ask me how he comes by this privilege. I can only tell you that he has some uncommonly strong interest to back him in certain high quarters which you and I had better not mention except under our breaths. He has been a lawyer's clerk; and he is wonderfully conceited in his opinion of himself, as well as mean and underhand to look at. According to his own account, he leaves his old trade, and joins ours, of his own free will and preference. You will no more believe that than I do. My notion

is, that he has managed to ferret out some private information in connection with the affairs of one of his master's clients, which makes him rather an awkward customer to keep in the office for the future, and which, at the same time, gives him hold enough over his employer to make it dangerous to drive him into a corner by turning him away. I think the giving him this unheard-of chance among us, is, in plain words, pretty much like giving him hush-money to keep him quiet. However that may be, Mr. Matthew Sharpin is to have the case now in your hands; and if he succeeds with it, he pokes his ugly nose into our office, as sure as fate. I put you up to this, Sergeant, so that you may not stand in your own light by giving the new man any cause to complain of you at headquarters, and remain yours,

FRANCIS THEAKSTONE.

FROM MR. MATTHEW SHARPIN TO CHIEF INSPECTOR THEAKSTONE.

LONDON, July 5th, 18—.

DEAR SIR,

Having now been favored with the necessary instructions from Sergeant Bulmer, I beg to remind you of certain directions which I have received, relating to the report of my future proceedings which I am to prepare for examination at headquarters.

The object of my writing, and of your examining what I have written, before you send it in to the higher authorities, is, I am informed, to give me, as an untried hand, the benefit of your advice, in case I want it (which I venture to think I shall not) at any stage of my proceedings. As the extraordinary circumstances of the case on which I am now engaged, make it impossible for me to absent myself from the place where the robbery was committed, until I have made some progress towards discovering the thief, I am necessarily precluded from consulting you personally. Hence the necessity of my writing down the various details, which might, perhaps, be better communicated by word of mouth. This, if I am not mistaken, is the position in which we are now placed. I state my own impressions on the subject, in writing, in order that we may clearly understand each other at the outset—and have the honor to remain, your obedient servant,

MATTHEW SHARPIN.

FROM CHIEF INSPECTOR THEAKSTONE TO MR. MATTHEW SHARPIN.

LONDON, 5th July, 18—.

SIR,

You have begun by wasting time, ink, and paper. We both of us perfectly well knew the position we stood in towards each other, when I sent you with my letter to Sergeant Bulmer. There was not the least need to repeat it in writing. Be so good as to employ your pen, in future, on the business actually in hand.

You have now three separate matters on which to write to me. First, You have to draw up a statement of your instructions received from Sergeant Bulmer, in order to show us that nothing has escaped your memory, and that you are thoroughly acquainted with all the circumstances of the case which has been entrusted to you. Secondly, You are to inform me what it is you propose to do. Thirdly, You are to report every inch of your progress (if you make any) from day to day, and, if need be, from hour to hour as well. This is *your* duty. As to what *my* duty may be, when I want you to remind me of it, I will write and tell you so. In the meantime, I remain, yours,

FRANCIS THEAKSTONE.

FROM MR. MATTHEW SHARPIN TO CHIEF INSPECTOR THEAKSTONE.

LONDON, 6th July, 18—.

SIR,

You are rather an elderly person, and, as such, naturally inclined to be a little jealous of men like me, who are in the prime of their lives and their faculties. Under these circumstances, it is my duty to be considerate towards you, and not to bear too hardly on your small failings. I decline, therefore, altogether, to take offense at the tone of your letter; I give you the full benefit of the natural generosity of my nature; I sponge the very existence of your surly communication out of my memory—in short, Chief Inspector Theakstone, I forgive you, and proceed to business.

My first duty is to draw up a full statement of the instructions I have received from Sergeant Bulmer. Here they are at your service, according to my version of them.

At number 13, Rutherford Street, Soho, there is a stationer's shop. It is kept by one Mr. Yatman. He is a married man, but

has no family. Besides Mr. and Mrs. Yatman, the other inmates in the house are a young single man named Jay, who lodges in the front room on the second floor—a shopman, who sleeps in one of the attics,—and a servant-of-all-work, whose bed is in the back-kitchen. Once a week a charwoman comes for a few hours in the morning only, to help this servant. These are all the persons who, on ordinary occasions, have means of access to the interior of the house, placed, as a matter of course, at their disposal.

Mr. Yatman has been in business for many years, carrying on his affairs prosperously enough to realize a handsome independence for a person in his position. Unfortunately for himself, he endeavored to increase the amount of his property by speculating. He ventured boldly in his investments, luck went against him, and rather less than two years ago he found himself a poor man again. All that was saved out of the wreck of his property was the sum of two hundred pounds.

Although Mr. Yatman did his best to meet his altered circumstances, by giving up many of the luxuries and comforts to which he and his wife had been accustomed, he found it impossibe to retrench so far as to allow of putting by any money from the income produced by his shop. The business has been declining of late years—the cheap advertising stationers having done it injury with the public. Consequently, up to the last week the only surplus property possessed by Mr. Yatman consisted of the two hundred pounds which had been recovered from the wreck of his fortune. This sum was placed as a deposit in a joint-stock bank of the highest possible character.

Eight days ago, Mr. Yatman and his lodger, Mr. Jay, held a conversation on the subject of the commercial difficulties which are hampering trade in all directions at the present time. Mr. Jay (who lives by supplying the newspapers with short paragraphs relating to accidents, offenses, and brief records of remarkable occurrences in general—who is, in short, what they call a penny-a-liner) told his landlord that he had been in the city that day, and had heard unfavorable rumors on the subject of the joint-stock banks. The rumors to which he alluded had already reached the ears of Mr. Yatman from other quarters; and the confirmation of them by his lodger had such an effect on his mind—predisposed as it was to alarm by the experience of his former losses—that he resolved to go at once to the bank and withdraw his deposit. It was then getting on towards the

end of the afternoon; and he arrived just in time to receive his money before the bank closed.

He received the deposit in bank notes of the following amounts;—one fifty-pound note, three twenty-pound notes, six ten-pound notes, and six five-pound notes. His object in drawing the money in this form was to have it ready to lay out immediately in trifling loans, on good security, among the small tradespeople of his district, some of whom are sorely pressed for the very means of existence at the present time. Investments of this kind seemed to Mr. Yatman to be the most safe and the most profitable on which he could now venture.

He brought the money back in an envelope placed in his breast-pocket; and asked his shopman, on getting home, to look for a small flat tin cash-box, which had not been used for years, and which, as Mr. Yatman remembered it, was exactly of the right size to hold the bank-notes. For some time the cash-box was searched for in vain. Mr. Yatman called to his wife to know if she had any idea where it was. The question was overheard by the servant-of-all-work, who was taking up the tea-tray at the time, and by Mr. Jay, who was coming downstairs on his way out to the theater. Ultimately the cash-box was found by the shopman. Mr. Yatman placed the bank-notes in it, secured them by a padlock, and put the box in his coat-pocket. It stuck out of the coat-pocket a very little, but enough to be seen. Mr. Yatman remained at home, upstairs, all the evening. No visitors called. At eleven o'clock he went to bed, and put the cash-box along with his clothes, on a chair by the bedside.

When he and his wife woke the next morning, the box was gone. Payment of the notes was immediately stopped at the bank of England; but no news of the money has been heard of since that time.

So far, the circumstances of the case are perfectly clear. They point unmistakably to the conclusion that the robbery must have been committed by some person living in the house. Suspicion falls, therefore, upon the servant-of-all-work, upon the shopman, and upon Mr. Jay. The two first knew that the cash-box was being inquired for by their master, but they did not know what it was he wanted to put into it. They would assume, of course, that it was money. They both had opportunities (the servant, when she took away the tea—and the shopman, when he came, after shutting up, to give the keys of the till to his master)

of seeing the cash-box in Mr. Yatman's pocket, and of inferring naturally, from its position there, that he intended to take it into his bedroom with him at night.

Mr. Jay, on the other hand, had been told, during the afternoon's conversation on the subject of joint-stock banks, that his landlord had a deposit of two hundred pounds in one of them. He also knew that Mr. Yatman left him with the intention of drawing that money out; and he heard the inquiry for the cash-box, afterwards, when he was coming downstairs. He must, therefore, have inferred that the money was in the house, and that the cash-box was the receptacle intended to contain it. That he could have had any idea, however, of the place in which Mr. Yatman intended to keep it for the night, is impossible, seeing that he went out before the box was found, and did not return till his landlord was in bed. Consequently, if he committed the robbery, he must have gone into the bedroom purely on speculation.

Speaking of the bedroom reminds me of the necessity of noticing the situation of it in the house, and the means that exist of gaining easy access to it at any hour of the night.

The room in question is the back-room on the first-floor. In consequence of Mrs. Yatman's constitutional nervousness on the subject of fire (which makes her apprehend being burnt alive in her room, in case of accident, by the hampering of the lock if the key is turned in it) her husband has never been accustomed to lock the bedroom door. Both he and his wife are, by their own admission, heavy sleepers. Consequently the risk to be run by any evil-disposed persons wishing to plunder the bedroom, was of the most trifling kind. They could enter the room by merely turning the handle of the door; and if they moved with ordinary caution, there was no fear of their waking the sleepers inside. This fact is of importance. It strengthens our conviction that the money must have been taken by one of the inmates of the house, because it tends to show that the robbery, in this case, might have been committed by persons not possessed of the superior vigilance and cunning of the experienced thief.

Such are the circumstances, as they were related to Sergeant Bulmer, when he was first called in to discover the guilty parties, and, if possible, to recover the lost bank-notes. The strictest inquiry which he could institute, failed of producing the smallest fragment of evidence against any of the persons on whom suspicion naturally fell. Their language and behavior, on being

informed of the robbery, was perfectly consistent with the language and behavior of innocent people. Sergeant Bulmer felt from the first that this was a case for private inquiry and secret observation. He began by recommending Mr. and Mrs. Yatman to affect a feeling of perfect confidence in the innocence of the persons living under their roof; and he then opened the campaign by employing himself in following the goings and comings, and in discovering the friends, the habits, and the secrets of the maid-of-all-work.

Three days and nights of exertion on his own part, and on that of others who were competent to assist his investigations, were enough to satisfy him that there was no sound cause for suspicion against the girl.

He next practised the same precaution in relation to the shopman. There was more difficulty and uncertainty in privately clearing up this person's character without his knowledge, but the obstacles were at last smoothed away with tolerable success; and though there is not the same amount of certainty, in this case, which there was in that of the girl, there is still fair reason for supposing that the shopman has had nothing to do with the robbery of the cash-box.

As a necessary consequence of these proceedings, the range of suspicion now becomes limited to the lodger, Mr. Jay.

When I presented your letter of introduction to Sergeant Bulmer, he had already made some inquiries on the subject of this young man. The result, so far, has not been at all favorable. Mr. Jay's habits are irregular; he frequents public houses, and seems to be familiarly acquainted with a great many dissolute characters; he is in debt to most of the tradespeople whom he employs; he has not paid his rent to Mr. Yatman for the last month; yesterday evening he came home excited by liquor, and last week he was seen talking to a prize-fighter. In short, though Mr. Jay does call himself a journalist, in virtue of his penny-a-line contributions to the newspapers, he is a young man of low tastes, vulgar manners, and bad habits. Nothing has yet been discovered in relation to him, which redounds to his credit in the smallest degree.

I have now reported, down to the very last details, all the particulars communicated to me by Sergeant Bulmer. I believe you will not find an omission anywhere; and I think you will admit, though you are prejudiced against me, that a clearer statement of facts was never laid before you than the statement

I have now made. My next duty is to tell you what I propose to do now that the case is confided to my hands.

In the first place, it is clearly my business to take up the case at the point where Sergeant Bulmer has left it. On his authority, I am justified in assuming that I have no need to trouble myself about the maid-of-all-work and the shopman. Their characters are now to be considered as cleared up. What remains to be privately investigated is the question of the guilt or innocence of Mr. Jay. Before we give up the notes for lost, we must make sure, if we can, that he knows nothing about them.

This is the plan that I have adopted, with the full approval of Mr. and Mrs. Yatman, for discovering whether Mr. Jay is or is not the person who has stolen the cash-box:—

I propose, to-day, to present myself at the house in the character of a young man who is looking for lodgings. The back room on the second-floor will be shown to me as the room to let; and I shall establish myself there to-night, as a person from the country who has come to London to look for a situation in a respectable shop or office.

By this means I shall be living next to the room occupied by Mr. Jay. The partition between us is mere lath and plaster. I shall make a small hole in it, near the cornice, through which I can see what Mr. Jay does in his room, and hear every word that is said when any friend happens to call on him. Whenever he is at home, I shall be at my post of observation. Whenever he goes out, I shall be after him. By employing these means of watching him, I believe I may look forward to the discovery of his secret—if he knows anything about the lost bank-notes—as to a dead certainty.

What you may think of my plan of observation I cannot undertake to say. It appears to me to unite the invaluable merits of boldness and simplicity. Fortified by this conviction, I close the present communication with feelings of the most sanguine description in regard to the future, and remain your obedient servant,

MATTHEW SHARPIN.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

7th July.

SIR,

As you have not honored me with any answer to my last communication, I assume that, in spite of your prejudices against

me, it has produced the favorable impression on your mind which I ventured to anticipate. Gratified beyond measure by the token of approval which your eloquent silence conveys to me, I proceed to report the progress that has been made in the course of the last twenty-four hours.

I am now comfortably established next door to Mr. Jay; and I am delighted to say that I have two holes in the partition, instead of one. My natural sense of humor has led me into the pardonable extravagance of giving them appropriate names. One I call my peep-hole, and the other my pipe-hole. The name of the first explains itself; the name of the second refers to a small tin pipe, or tube, inserted in the hole, and twisted so that the mouth of it comes close to my ear, while I am standing at my post of observation. Thus, while I am looking at Mr. Jay through my peep-hole, I can hear every word that may be spoken in his room through my pipe-hole.

Perfect candor—a virtue which I have possessed from my childhood—compels me to acknowledge, before I go any further, that the ingenious notion of adding a pipe-hole to my proposed peep-hole originated with Mrs. Yatman. This lady—a most intelligent and accomplished person, simple, and yet distinguished, in her manners—has entered into all my little plans with an enthusiasm and intelligence which I cannot too highly praise. Mr. Yatman is so cast down by his loss, that he is quite incapable of affording me any assistance. Mrs. Yatman, who is evidently most tenderly attached to him, feels her husband's sad condition of mind even more acutely than she feels the loss of the money; and is mainly stimulated to exertion by her desire to assist in raising him from the miserable state of prostration into which he has now fallen.

"The money, Mr. Sharpin," she said to me yesterday evening, with tears in her eyes, "the money may be regained by rigid economy and strict attention to business. It is my husband's wretched state of mind that makes me so anxious for the discovery of the thief. I may be wrong, but I felt hopeful of success as soon as you entered the house; and I believe, if the wretch who has robbed us is to be found, you are the man to discover him." I accepted this gratifying compliment in the spirit in which it was offered—firmly believing that I shall be found, sooner or later, to have thoroughly deserved it.

Let me now return to business; that is to say, to my peep-hole and my pipe-hole.

I have enjoyed some hours of calm observation of Mr. Jay. Though rarely at home, as I understand from Mrs. Yatman, on ordinary occasions, he has been indoors the whole of this day. That is suspicious, to begin with. I have to report, further, that he rose at a late hour this morning (always a bad sign in a young man), and that he lost a great deal of time, after he was up, in yawning and complaining to himself of headache. Like other debauched characters, he ate little or nothing for breakfast. His next proceeding was to smoke a pipe—a dirty clay pipe, which a gentleman would have been ashamed to put between his lips. When he had done smoking, he took out pen, ink, and paper, and sat down to write with a groan—whether of remorse for having taking the bank-notes, or of disgust at the task before him, I am unable to say. After writing a few lines (too far away from my peep-hole to give me a chance of reading over his shoulder), he leaned back in his chair, and amused himself by humming the tunes of certain popular songs. Whether these do, or do not, represent secret signals by which he communicates with his accomplices remains to be seen. After he had amused himself for some time by humming, he got up and began to walk about the room, occasionally stopping to add a sentence to the paper on his desk. Before long, he went to a locked cupboard and opened it. I strained my eyes eagerly, in expectation of making a discovery. I saw him take something carefully out of the cupboard—he turned round—and it was only a pint bottle of brandy! Having drunk some of the liquor, this extremely indolent reprobate lay down on his bed again, and in five minutes was fast asleep.

After hearing him snoring for at least two hours, I was recalled to my peep-hole by a knock at his door. He jumped up and opened it with suspicious activity.

A very small boy, with a very dirty face, walked in, said, "Please, sir, they're waiting for you," sat down on a chair, with his legs a long way from the ground, and instantly fell asleep! Mr. Jay swore an oath, tied a wet towel round his head, and going back to his paper, began to cover it with writing as fast as his fingers could move the pen. Occasionally getting up to dip the towel in water and tie it on again, he continued at this employment for nearly three hours; then folded up the leaves of writing, woke the boy, and gave them to him, with this remarkable expression:—"Now, then, young sleepyhead, quick—march! If you see the governor, tell him to have the money

ready when I call for it." The boy grinned, and disappeared. I was sorely tempted to follow "sleepy head," but, on reflection, considered it safest still to keep my eye on the proceedings of Mr. Jay.

In half an hour's time, he put on his hat and walked out. Of course, I put on my hat and walked out also. As I went downstairs, I passed Mrs. Yatman going up. The lady has been kind enough to undertake, by previous arrangement between us, to search Mr. Jay's room, while he is out of the way, and while I am necessarily engaged in the pleasing duty of following him wherever he goes. On the occasion to which I now refer, he walked straight to the nearest tavern, and ordered a couple of mutton chops for his dinner. I placed myself in the next box to him, and ordered a couple of mutton chops for my dinner. Before I had been in the room a minute, a young man of highly suspicious manners and appearance, sitting at a table opposite, took his glass of porter in his hand and joined Mr. Jay. I pretended to be reading the newspaper, and listened, as in duty bound, with all my might.

"Jack has been here inquiring after you," says the young man.

"Did he leave any message?" asks Mr. Jay.

"Yes," says the other. "He told me, if I met with you, to say that he wished very particularly to see you to-night; and that he would give you a look in, at Rutherford Street, at seven o'clock."

"All right," says Mr. Jay. "I'll get back in time to see him."

Upon this, the suspicious-looking young man finished his porter, and saying that he was rather in a hurry, took leave of his friend (perhaps I should not be wrong if I said his accomplice) and left the room.

At twenty-five minutes and a half past six—in these serious cases it is important to be particular about time—Mr. Jay finished his chops and paid his bill. At twenty-six minutes and three-quarters I finished my chops and paid mine. In ten minutes more I was inside the house at Rutherford Street, and was received by Mrs. Yatman in the passage. That charming woman's face exhibited an expression of melancholy and disappointment which it quite grieved me to see.

"I am afraid, Ma'am," says I, "that you have not hit on any little criminating discovery in the lodger's room?"

She shook her head and sighed. It was a soft, languid, flut-

tering sigh;—and, upon my life, it quite upset me. For the moment I forgot business, and burned with envy of Mr. Yatman.

"Don't despair, Ma'am," I said with an insinuating mildness which seemed to touch her. "I have heard a mysterious conversation—I know of a guilty appointment—and I expect great things from my peep-hole and my pipe-hole to-night. Pray, don't be alarmed, but I think we are on the brink of a discovery."

Here my enthusiastic devotion to business got the better of my tender feelings. I looked—winked—nodded—left her.

When I got back to my observatory, I found Mr. Jay digesting his mutton-chops in an armchair, with his pipe in his mouth. On his table were two tumblers, a jug of water, and the pint-bottle of brandy. It was then close upon seven o'clock. As the hour struck, the person described as "Jack" walked in.

He looked agitated—I am happy to say he looked violently agitated. The cheerful glow of anticipated success diffused itself (to use a strong expression) all over me, from head to foot. With breathless interest I looked through my peep-hole, and saw the visitor—the "Jack" of this delightful case—sit down, facing me, at the opposite side of the table to Mr. Jay. Making allowance for the difference in expression which their countenances just now happened to exhibit, these two abandoned villains were so much alike in other respects as to lead at once to the conclusion that they were brothers. Jack was the cleaner man and the better dressed of the two. I admit that, at the outset. It is, perhaps, one of my failings to push justice and impartiality to their utmost limits. I am no Pharisee; and where Vice has its redeeming point, I say, let Vice have its due—yes, yes, by all manner of means, let Vice have its due.

"What's the matter now, Jack?" says Mr. Jay.

"Can't you see it in my face?" says Jack. "My dear fellow, delays are dangerous. Let us have done with suspense, and risk it the day after to-morrow."

"So soon as that?" cries Mr. Jay, looking very much astonished. "Well, I'm ready, if you are. But, I say, Jack, is Somebody Else ready too? Are you quite sure of that?"

He smiled as he spoke—a frightful smile—and laid a very strong emphasis on those two words, "Somebody Else." There is evidently a third ruffian, a nameless desperado, concerned in the business.

"Meet us to-morrow," says Jack, "and judge for yourself. Be in the Regent's Park at eleven in the morning, and look out for us at the turning that leads to the Avenue Road."

"I'll be there," says Mr. Jay. "Have a drop of brandy and water? What are you getting up for? You're not going already?"

"Yes, I am," says Jack. "The fact is, I'm so excited and agitated that I can't sit still anywhere for five minutes together. Ridiculous as it may appear to you, I'm in a perpetual state of nervous flutter. I can't, for the life of me, help fearing that we shall be found out. I fancy that every man who looks twice at me in the street is a spy——"

At those words, I thought my legs would have given way under me. Nothing but strength of mind kept me at my peep-hole—nothing else, I give you my word of honor.

"Stuff and nonsense!" cries Mr. Jay with all the effrontery of a veteran in crime. "We have kept the secret up to this time, and we will manage cleverly to the end. Have a drop of brandy and water, and you will feel as certain about it as I do."

Jack steadily refused the brandy and water, and steadily persisted in taking his leave.

"I must try if I can't walk it off," he said. "Remember to-morrow morning—eleven o'clock, Avenue Road side of the Regent's Park."

With those words he went out. His hardened relative laughed desperately, and resumed the dirty clay pipe.

I sat down on the side of my bed, actually quivering with excitement.

It is clear to me that no attempt has yet been made to change the stolen bank-notes; and I may add that Sergeant Bulmer was of that opinion also, when he left the case in my hands. What is the natural conclusion to draw from the conversation which I have just set down? Evidently, that the confederates meet to-morrow to take their respective shares in the stolen money, and to decide on the safest means of getting the notes changed the day after. Mr. Jay is, beyond a doubt, the leading criminal in this business, and he will probably run the chief risk—that of changing the fifty-pound note. I shall, therefore, still make it my business to follow him—attending at the Regent's Park to-morrow, and doing my best to hear what is said there. If another appointment is made for the day after, I shall, of course, go to it. In the meantime, I shall want the immediate assistance

of two competent persons (supposing the rascals separate after their meeting) to follow the two minor criminals. It is only fair to add, that, if the rogues all retire together, I shall probably keep my subordinates in reserve. Being naturally ambitious, I desire, if possible, to have the whole credit of discovering this robbery to myself.

8th July.

I have to acknowledge, with thanks, the speedy arrival of my two subordinates—men of very average abilities, I am afraid; but, fortunately, I shall always be on the spot to direct them.

My first business this morning was, necessarily, to prevent mistakes by accounting to Mr. and Mrs. Yatman for the presence of two strangers on the scene. Mr. Yatman (between ourselves, a poor feeble man) only shook his head and groaned. Mrs. Yatman (that superior woman) favored me with a charming look of intelligence.

"Oh, Mr. Sharpin!" she said, "I am so sorry to see those two men! Your sending for their assistance looks as if you were beginning to be doubtful of success."

I privately winked at her (she is very good in allowing me to do so without taking offense), and told her, in my facetious way, that she labored under a slight mistake.

"It is because I am sure of success, Ma'am, that I send for them. I am determined to recover the money, not for my own sake only, but for Mr. Yatman's sake—and for yours."

I laid a considerable amount of stress on those last three words. She said, "Oh, Mr. Sharpin!" again—and blushed of a heavenly red—and looked down at her work. I could go to the world's end with that woman, if Mr. Yatman would only die.

I sent off the two subordinates to wait, until I wanted them, at the Avenue Road gate of the Regent's Park. Half an hour afterwards I was following the same direction myself, at the heels of Mr. Jay.

The two confederates were punctual to the appointed time, I blush to record it, but it is nevertheless necessary to state, that the third rogue—the nameless desperado of my report, or if you prefer it, the mysterious "Somebody Else" of the conversation between the two brothers—is a Woman! and, what is worse, a young woman; and what is more lamentable still, a nice-looking woman! I have long resisted a growing conviction, that, wherever there is mischief in this world, an individual of the

fair sex is inevitably certain to be mixed up in it. After the experience of this morning, I can struggle against that sad conclusion no longer.—I give up the sex—excepting Mrs. Yatman, I give up the sex.

The man named "Jack" offered the woman his arm. Mr. Jay placed himself on the other side of her. The three then walked away slowly among the trees. I followed them at a respectful distance. My two subordinates, at a respectful distance also, followed me.

It was, I deeply regret to say, impossible to get near enough to them to overhear their conversation, without running too great a risk of being discovered. I could only infer from their gestures and actions that they were all three talking with extraordinary earnestness on some subject which deeply interested them. After having been engaged in this way a full quarter of an hour, they suddenly turned round to retrace their steps. My presence of mind did not forsake me in this emergency. I signed to the two subordinates to walk on carelessly and pass them, while I myself slipped dexterously behind a tree. As they came by me, I heard "Jack" address these words to Mr. Jay:—

"Let us say half past ten to-morrow morning. And mind you come in a cab. We had better not risk taking one in this neighborhood."

Mr. Jay made some brief reply, which I could not overhear. They walked back to the place at which they had met, shaking hands there with an audacious cordiality which it quite sickened me to see. They then separated. I followed Mr. Jay. My subordinates paid the same delicate attention to the other two.

Instead of taking me back to Rutherford Street, Mr. Jay led me to the Strand. He stopped at a dingy, disreputable-looking house, which, according to the inscription over the door, was a newspaper office, but which, in my judgment, had all the external appearance of a place devoted to the reception of stolen goods.

After remaining inside for a few minutes, he came out, whistling, with his finger and thumb in his waistcoat pocket. A less discreet man than myself would have arrested him on the spot. I remembered the necessity of catching the two confederates, and the importance of not interfering with the appointment that had been made for the next morning. Such coolness as this, under trying circumstances, is rarely to be

found, I should imagine, in a young beginner, whose reputation as a detective policeman is still to make.

From the house of suspicious appearance, Mr. Jay betook himself to a cigar-divan, and read the magazines over a cheroot. I sat at a table near him, and read the magazines likewise over a cheroot. From the divan he strolled to the tavern and had his chops. I strolled to the tavern and had my chops. When he had done, he went back to his lodging. When I had done, I went back to mine. He was overcome with drowsiness early in the evening, and went to bed. As soon as I heard him snoring, I was overcome with drowsiness, and went to bed also.

Early in the morning my two subordinates came to make their report.

They had seen the man named "Jack" leave the woman near the gate of an apparently respectable villa-residence, not far from the Regent's Park. Left to himself, he took a turning to the right, which led to a sort of suburban street, principally inhabited by shopkeepers. He stopped at the private door of one of the houses, and let himself in with his own key—looking about him as he opened the door, and staring suspiciously at my men as they lounged along on the opposite side of the way. These were all the particulars which the subordinates had to communicate. I kept them in my room to attend on me, if needful, and mounted to my peep-hole to have a look at Mr. Jay.

He was occupied in dressing himself, and was taking extraordinary pains to destroy all traces of the natural slovenliness of his appearance. This was precisely what I expected. A vagabond like Mr. Jay knows the importance of giving himself a respectable look when he is going to run the risk of changing a stolen bank-note. At five minutes past ten o'clock, he had given the last brush to his shabby hat and the last scouring with bread-crumb to his dirty gloves. At ten minutes past ten he was in the street, on his way to the nearest cab-stand, and I and my subordinates were close on his heels.

He took a cab, and we took a cab. I had not overheard them appoint a place of meeting, when following them in the Park on the previous day; but I soon found that we were proceeding in the old direction of the Avenue Road gate.

The cab in which Mr. Jay was riding turned into the Park slowly. We stopped outside, to avoid exciting suspicion. I got out to follow the cab on foot. Just as I did so, I saw it stop, and

detected the two confederates approaching it from among the trees. They got in, and the cab was turned about directly. I ran back to my own cab, and told the driver to let them pass him, and then to follow as before.

The man obeyed my directions, but so clumsily as to excite their suspicions. We had been driving after them about three minutes (returning along the road by which we had advanced) when I looked out of the window to see how far they might be ahead of us. As I did this, I saw two hats popped out of the windows of their cab, and two faces looking back at me. I sank into my place in a cold sweat;—the expression is coarse but no other form of words can describe my condition at that trying moment.

"We are found out!" I said faintly to my two subordinates. They stared at me in astonishment. My feelings changed instantly from the depth of despair to the height of indignation.

"It is the cabman's fault. Get out, one of you," I said, with dignity—"get out, and punch his head."

Instead of following my directions (I should wish this act of disobedience to be reported at headquarters) they both looked out of the window. Before I could pull them back, they both sat down again. Before I could express my just indignation, they both grinned, and said to me, "Please to look out, sir!"

I did look out. The thieves' cab had stopped.

Where?

At a church door!!!

What effect this discovery might have had upon the ordinary run of men, I don't know. Being of a strong religious turn myself, it filled me with horror. I have often read of the unprincipled cunning of criminal persons; but I never before heard of three thieves attempting to double on their pursuers by entering a church! The sacrilegious audacity of that proceeding is, I should think, unparalleled in the annals of crime.

I checked my grinning subordinates by a frown. It was easy to see what was passing in their superficial minds. If I had not been able to look below the surface, I might, on observing two nicely-dressed men and one nicely-dressed woman enter a church before eleven in the morning on a week day, have come to the same hasty conclusion at which my inferiors had evidently arrived. As it was, appearances had no power to impose on *me*. I got out, and, followed by one of my men, entered the church. The other man I sent round to watch the vestry door. You

may catch a weasel asleep—but not your humble servant, Matthew Sharpin!

We stole up the gallery stairs, diverged to the organ loft and peered through the curtains in front. There they were all three, sitting in a pew below—yes, incredible as it may appear, sitting in a pew below!

Before I could determine what to do, a clergyman made his appearance in full canonicals, from the vestry door, followed by a clerk. My brain whirled, and my eyesight grew dim. Dark remembrances of robberies committed in vestries floated through my mind. I trembled for the excellent man in full canonicals—I even trembled for the clerk.

The clergyman placed himself inside the altar rails. The three desperadoes approached him. He opened his book, and began to read. What?—you will ask.

I answer, without the slightest hesitation, the first lines of the Marriage Service.

My subordinate had the audacity to look at me, and then to stuff his pocket-handkerchief into his mouth. I scorned to pay any attention to him. After I had discovered that the man "Jack" was the bridegroom, and that the man Jay acted the part of father, and gave away the bride, I left the church, followed by my man, and joined the other subordinate outside the vestry door. Some people in my position would now have felt rather crestfallen, and would have begun to think that they had made a very foolish mistake. Not the faintest misgiving of any kind troubled me. I did not feel in the slightest degree depreciated in my own estimation. And even now, after a lapse of three hours, my mind remains, I am happy to say, in the same calm and hopeful condition.

As soon as I and my subordinates were assembled together outside the church, I intimated my intention of still following the other cab, in spite of what had occurred. My reason for deciding on this course will appear presently. The two subordinates were astonished at my resolution. One of them had the impertinence to say to me:—

"If you please, sir, who is it that we are after? A man who has stolen money, or a man who has stolen a wife?"

The other low person encouraged him by laughing. Both have deserved an official reprimand; and both, I sincerely trust, will be sure to get it.

When the marriage ceremony was over, the three got into

their cab; and once more our vehicle (neatly hidden round the corner of the church, so that they could not suspect it to be near them) started to follow theirs.

We traced them to the terminus of the South-Western Railway. The newly-married couple took tickets for Richmond—paying their fare with a half-sovereign, and so depriving me of the pleasure of arresting them, which I should certainly have done, if they had offered a bank-note. They parted from Mr. Jay, saying, "Remember the address,—14, Babylon Terrace. You dine with us to-morrow week." Mr. Jay accepted the invitation, and added, jocosely, that he was going home at once to get off his clean clothes, and to be comfortable and dirty again for the rest of the day. I have to report that I saw him home safely, and that he is comfortable and dirty again (to use his own disgraceful language) at the present moment.

Here the affair rests, having by this time reached what I may call its first stage.

I know very well what persons of hasty judgment will be inclined to say of my proceedings thus far. They will assert that I have been deceiving myself all through, in the most absurd way; they will declare that the suspicious conversations which I have reported, referred solely to the difficulties and dangers of successfully carrying out a runaway match; and they will appeal to the scene in the church, as offering undeniable proof of the correctness of their assertions. So let it be. I dispute nothing up to this point. But I ask a question, out of the depths of my own sagacity as a man of the world, which the bitterest of my enemies will not, I think, find it particularly easy to answer.

Granted the fact of the marriage, what proof does it afford me of the innocence of the three persons concerned in that clandestine transaction? It gives me none. On the contrary, it strengthens my suspicions against Mr. Jay and his confederates, because it suggests a distinct motive for their stealing the money. A gentleman who is going to spend his honeymoon at Richmond wants money; and a gentleman who is in debt to all his tradespeople wants money. Is this an unjustifiable imputation of bad motives? In the name of outraged morality, I deny it. These men have combined together, and have stolen a woman. Why should they not combine together, and steal a cash-box? I take my stand on the logic of rigid virtue; and

I defy all the sophistry of vice to move me an inch out of my position.

Speaking of virtue, I may add that I have put this view of the case to Mr. and Mrs. Yatman. That accomplished and charming woman found it difficult, at first, to follow the close chain of my reasoning. I am free to confess that she shook her head, and shed tears, and joined her husband in premature lamentation over the loss of the two hundred pounds. But a little careful explanation on my part, and a little attentive listening on hers, ultimately changed her opinion. She now agrees with me, that there is nothing in this unexpected circumstance of the clandestine marriage which absolutely tends to divert suspicion from Mr. Jay, or Mr. "Jack," or the runaway lady. "Audacious hussy" was the term my fair friend used in speaking of her, but let that pass. It is more to the purpose to record that Mrs. Yatman has not lost confidence in me and that Mr. Yatman promises to follow her example, and do his best to look hopefully for future results.

I have now, in the new turn that circumstances have taken, to await advice from your office. I pause for fresh orders with all the composure of a man who has got two strings to his bow. When I traced the three confederates from the church door to the railway terminus, I had two motives for doing so. First, I followed them as a matter of official business, believing them still to have been guilty of the robbery. Second, I followed them as a matter of private speculation, with a view of discovering the place of refuge to which the runaway couple intended to retreat, and of making my information a marketable commodity to offer to the young lady's family and friends. Thus, whatever happens, I may congratulate myself beforehand on not having wasted my time. If the office approves of my conduct, I have my plan ready for further proceedings. If the office blames me, I shall take myself off, with my marketable information, to the genteel villa-residence in the neighborhood of the Regent's Park. Any way, the affair puts money into my pocket, and does credit to my penetration as an uncommonly sharp man.

I have only one word more to add, and it is this:—If any individual ventures to assert that Mr. Jay and his confederates are innocent of all share in the stealing of the cash-box, I, in return, defy that individual—though he may even be Chief

Inspector Theakstone himself—to tell me who has committed the robbery at Rutherford Street, Soho.

I have the honor to be,
Your very obedient servant,
MATTHEW SHARPIN.

FROM CHIEF INSPECTOR THEAKSTONE TO SERGEANT BULMER.

BIRMINGHAM, July 9th

SERGEANT BULMER,

That empty-headed puppy, Mr. Matthew Sharpin, has made a mess of the case at Rutherford Street, exactly as I expected he would. Business keeps me in this town; so I write to you to set the matter straight. I enclose, with this, the pages of feeble scribble-scrabble which the creature, Sharpin, calls a report. Look them over; and when you have made your way through all the gabble, I think you will agree with me that the conceited booby has looked for the thief in every direction but the right one. You can lay your hand on the guilty person in five minutes, now. Settle the case at once; forward your report to me at this place; and tell Mr. Sharpin that he is suspended till further notice.

Yours,
FRANCIS THEAKSTONE.

FROM SERGEANT BULMER TO CHIEF INSPECTOR THEAKSTONE.

LONDON, July 10th.

INSPECTOR THEAKSTONE,

Your letter and enclosure came safe to hand. Wise men, they say, may always learn something, even from a fool. By the time I had got through Sharpin's maundering report of his own folly, I saw my way clear enough to the end of the Rutherford Street case, just as you thought I should. In half an hour's time I was at the house. The first person I saw there was Mr. Sharpin himself.

"Have you come to help me?" says he.

"Not exactly," says I. "I've come to tell you that you are suspended till further notice."

"Very good," says he, not taken down, by so much as a single peg, in his own estimation. "I thought you would be jealous of me. It's very natural; and I don't blame you. Walk

in, pray, and make yourself at home. I'm off to do a little detective business on my own account, in the neighborhood of the Regent's Park. Ta-ta, sergeant, ta-ta!"

With those words he took himself out of the way—which was exactly what I wanted him to do.

As soon as the maid-servant had shut the door, I told her to inform her master that I wanted to say a word to him in private. She showed me into the parlor behind the shop; and there was Mr. Yatman, all alone, reading the newspaper.

"About this matter of the robbery, sir," says I.

He cut me short, peevishly enough—being naturally a poor, weak, womanish sort of man. "Yes, yes, I know," says he. "You have come to tell me that your wonderfully clever man, who has bored holes in my second-floor partition, has made a mistake, and is off the scent of the scoundrel who has stolen my money."

"Yes, sir," says I. "That *is* one of the things I came to tell you. But I have got something else to say, besides that."

"Can you tell me who the thief is?" says he, more pettish than ever.

"Yes, sir," says I, "I think I can."

He put down the newspaper, and began to look rather anxious and frightened.

"Not my shopman?" says he. "I hope, for the man's own sake, it's not my shopman."

"Guess again, sir," says I.

"That idle slut, the maid?" says he.

"She is idle, sir," says I, "and she is also a slut; my first inquiries about her proved as much as that. But she's not the thief."

"Then in the name of heaven, who is?" says he.

"Will you please to prepare yourself for a very disagreeable surprise, sir?" says I. "And in case you lose your temper, will you excuse my remarking that I am the stronger man of the two, and that, if you allow yourself to lay hands on me, I may unintentionally hurt you, in pure self-defense?"

He turned as pale as ashes, and pushed his chair two or three feet away from me.

"You have asked me to tell you, sir, who has taken your money," I went on. "If you insist on my giving you an answer——"

"I do insist," he said, faintly. "Who has taken it?"

"Your wife has taken it," I said very quietly, and very positively at the same time.

He jumped out of the chair as if I had put a knife into him, and struck his fist on the table, so heavily that the wood cracked again.

"Steady, sir," says I. "Flying into a passion won't help you to the truth."

"It's a lie!" says he, with another smack of his fist on the table—"a base, vile, infamous lie! How dare you——"

He stopped, and fell back into the chair again, looked about him in a bewildered way, and ended by bursting out crying.

"When your better sense comes back to you, sir," says I, "I am sure you will be gentleman enough to make an apology for the language you have just used. In the meantime, please to listen, if you can, to a word of explanation. Mr. Sharpin has sent in a report to our inspector, of the most irregular and ridiculous kind; setting down, not only all his own foolish doings and sayings, but the doing and sayings of Mrs. Yatman as well. In most cases, such a document would have been fit for the waste-paper basket; but, in this particular case, it so happens that Mr. Sharpin's budget of nonsense leads to a certain conclusion, which the simpleton of a writer has been quite innocent of suspecting from the beginning to the end. Of that conclusion I am so sure, that I will forfeit my place, if it does not turn out that Mrs. Yatman has been practising upon the folly and conceit of this young man, and that she has tried to shield herself from discovery by purposely encouraging him to suspect the wrong persons. I tell you that confidently; and I will even go further. I will undertake to give a decided opinion as to why Mrs. Yatman took the money, and what she has done with it, or with a part of it. Nobody can look at that lady, sir, without being struck by the great taste and beauty of her dress——"

As I said those last words, the poor man seemed to find his powers of speech again. He cut me short directly, as haughtily as if he had been a duke instead of a stationer.

"Try some other means of justifying your vile calumny against my wife," says he. "Her milliner's bill for the past year, is on my file of receipted accounts at this moment."

"Excuse me, sir," says I, "but that proves nothing. Milliners, I must tell you, have a certain rascally custom which comes within the daily experience of our office. A married

lady who wishes it, can keep two accounts at her dressmaker's; —one is the account which her husband sees and pays; the other is the private account, which contains all the extravagant items, and which the wife pays secretly, by instalments, whenever she can. According to our usual experience, these instalments are mostly squeezed out of the housekeeping money. In your case, I suspect no instalments have been paid; proceedings have been threatened; Mrs. Yatman, knowing your altered circumstances, has felt herself driven into a corner; and she has paid her private account out of your cash-box."

"I won't believe it," says he. "Every word you speak is an abominable insult to me and to my wife."

"Are you man enough, sir," says I, taking him up short, in order to save time and words, "to get that receipted bill you spoke of just now off the file, and come with me at once to the milliner's shop where Mrs. Yatman deals?"

He turned red in the face at that, got the bill directly, and put on his hat. I took out of my pocket-book the list containing the numbers of the lost notes, and we left the house together immediately.

Arrived at the milliner's (one of the expensive West-end houses, as I expected), I asked for a private interview, on important business, with the mistress of the concern. It was not the first time that she and I had met over the same delicate investigation. The moment she set eyes on me, she sent for her husband. I mentioned who Mr. Yatman was, and what we wanted.

"This is strictly private?" inquires her husband. I nodded my head.

"And confidential?" says the wife. I nodded again.

"Do you see any objection, dear, to obliging the sergeant with a sight of the books?" says the husband.

"None in the world, love, if you approve of it," says the wife.

All this while poor Mr. Yatman sat looking the picture of astonishment and distress, quite out of place at our polite conference. The books were brought—and one minute's look at the pages in which Mrs. Yatman's name figured was enough, and more than enough, to prove the truth of every word I had spoken.

There, in one book, was the husband's account, which Mr. Yatman had settled. And there, in the other, was the private account, crossed off also; the date of settlement being the very

day after the loss of the cash-box. This said private account amounted to the sum of a hundred and seventy-five pounds, odd shillings; and it extended over a period of three years. Not a single instalment had been paid on it. Under the last line was an entry to this effect: "Written to for the third time, June 23rd." I pointed to it, and asked the milliner if that meant "last June." Yes, it did mean last June; and she now deeply regretted to say that it had been accompanied by a threat of legal proceedings.

"I thought you gave good customers more than three years' credit?" says I.

The milliner looks at Mr. Yatman, and whispers to me—"Not when a lady's husband gets into difficulties."

She pointed to the account as she spoke. The entries after the time when Mr. Yatman's circumstances became involved were just as extravagant, for a person in his wife's situation, as the entries for the year before that period. If the lady had economized in other things, she had certainly not economized in the matter of dress.

There was nothing left now but to examine the cash-book, for form's sake. The money had been paid in notes, the amounts and numbers of which exactly tallied with the figures set down in my list.

After that, I thought it best to get Mr. Yatman out of the house immediately. He was in such a pitiable condition, that I called a cab and accompanied him home in it. At first he cried and raved like a child: but I soon quieted him—and I must add, to his credit, that he made me a most handsome apology for his language, as the cab drew up at his house-door. In return, I tried to give him some advice about how to set matters right, for the future, with his wife. He paid very little attention to me, and went upstairs muttering to himself about a separation. Whether Mrs. Yatman will come cleverly out of the scrape or not, seems doubtful. I should say, myself, that she will go into screeching hysterics, and so frighten the poor man into forgiving her. But this is no business of ours. So far as we are concerned, the case is now at an end; and the present report may come to a conclusion along with it.

I remain, accordingly, yours to command,

THOMAS BULMER.

P. S.—I have to add, that, on leaving Rutherford Street, I met Mr. Matthew Sharpin coming to pack up his things.

"Only think!" says he, rubbing his hands in great spirits, "I've been to the genteel villa-residence; and the moment I mentioned my business, they kicked me out directly. There were two witnesses of the assault; and it's worth a hundred pounds to me, if it's worth a farthing."

"I wish you joy of your luck," says I.

"Thank you," says he. "When may I pay you the same compliment on finding the thief?"

"Whenever you like," says I, "for the thief is found."

"Just what I expected," says he. "I've done all the work; and now you cut in, and claim all the credit—Mr. Jay of course?"

"No," says I.

"Who is it then?" says he.

"Ask Mrs. Yatman," says I. "She's waiting to tell you."

"All right! I'd much rather hear it from that charming woman than from you," says he, and goes into the house in a mighty hurry.

What do you think of that, Inspector Theakstone? Would you like to stand in Mr. Sharpin's shoes? I shouldn't, I can promise you!

FROM CHIEF INSPECTOR THEAKSTONE TO MR. MATTHEW SHARPIN.

July 12th.

SIR,

Sergeant Bulmer has already told you to consider yourself suspended until further notice. I have now authority to add, that your services as a member of the Detective Police are positively declined. You will please to take this letter as notifying officially your dismissal from the force.

I may inform you, privately, that your rejection is not intended to cast any reflections on your character. It merely implies that you are not quite sharp enough for our purpose. If we *are* to have a new recruit among us, we should infinitely prefer Mrs. Yatman.

Your obedient servant,
FRANCIS THEAKSONE.

NOTE ON THE PRECEDING CORRESPONDENCE, ADDED BY MR. THEAKSTONE.

The Inspector is not in a position to append any explanations of importance to the last of the letters. It has been discovered that

Mr. Matthew Sharpin left the house in Rutherford Street five minutes after his interview outside of it with Sergeant Bulmer—his manner expressing the liveliest emotions of terror and astonishment, and his left cheek displaying a bright patch of red, which might have been the result of a slap on the face from a female hand. He was also heard, by the shopman at Rutherford Street, to use a very shocking expression in reference to Mrs. Yatman; and was seen to clench his fist vindictively, as he ran round the corner of the street. Nothing more has been heard of him; and it is conjectured that he has left London with the intention of offering his valuable services to the provincial police.

On the interesting domestic subject of Mr. and Mrs. Yatman still less is known. It has, however, been positively ascertained that the medical attendant of the family was sent for in a great hurry, on the day when Mr. Yatman returned from the milliner's shop. The neighboring chemist received, soon afterwards, a prescription of a soothing nature to make up for Mrs. Yatman. The day after, Mr. Yatman purchased some smelling-salts at the shop, and afterwards appeared at the circulating library to ask for a novel, descriptive of high life, that would amuse an invalid lady. It has been inferred from these circumstances that he has not thought it desirable to carry out his threat of separating himself from his wife—at least in the present (presumed) condition of that lady's sensitive nervous system.

THE DOCTOR, HIS WIFE, AND THE CLOCK

ANNA KATHARINE GREEN (MRS. CHARLES ROHLFS) *was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 11, 1846. She was educated at Ripley Female College, taking her B. A. degree in 1867. In 1884 she married Charles Rohlfs, the designer of the famous "Rohlfs furniture." "The Leavenworth Case," her first novel, which was published in 1878, was an immediate success, and still sells to-day. It marked a definite stage in the early progress of American detective fiction. It was dramatized in 1892.*

During the past forty-five years Mrs. Rohlfs has published between thirty and forty works of fiction, mostly criminal romances. After "The Leavenworth Case" came "A Strange Disappearance" and "The Sword of Damocles." Then followed the now famous "Hand and Ring," which was republished in 1926. A list of Mrs. Rohlfs' best books includes (besides "The Leavenworth Case" and "Hand and Ring") "Behind Closed Doors," "That Affair Next Door," "One of My Sons," "The Filigree Ball," "The House in the Mist," "The Millionaire Baby," "The House of the Whispering Pines," "Initials Only," "The Mystery of the Hasty Arrow," "The Step on the Stair," and "The Forsaken Inn." The book setting forth the problems of Violet Strange, her female detective, is called "The Golden Slipper," and appeared in 1915. A recent edition of Mrs. Rohlfs' detective novels has been published in Germany by Lutz under the title of "Detektiv Gryce Serie."

"The Doctor, His Wife, and The Clock" (the story included in this volume) was first published in book form. It constitutes one of the most impressive of Ebenezer Gryce's cases, and reveals his deductive logic in highly characteristic fashion. The story was later remodeled into one of the "problems" for Violet Strange.

THE DOCTOR, HIS WIFE, AND THE CLOCK

By Anna Katharine Green

I

On the 17th of July, 1851, a tragedy of no little interest occurred in one of the residences of the Colonnade in Lafayette Place. *

Mr. Hasbrouck, a well-known and highly respected citizen, was attacked in his room by an unknown assailant, and shot dead before assistance could reach him. His murderer escaped, and the problem offered to the police was, how to identify this person who, by some happy chance or by the exercise of the most remarkable forethought, had left no traces behind him, or any clue by which he could be followed.

The affair was given to a young man, named Ebenezer Gryce, to investigate, and the story, as he tells it, is this:

When, some time after midnight, I reached Lafayette Place, I found the block lighted from end to end. Groups of excited men and women peered from the open doorways, and mingled their shadows with those of the huge pillars which adorn the front of this picturesque block of dwellings.

The house in which the crime had been committed was near the center of the row, and, long before I reached it, I had learned from more than one source that the alarm was first given to the street by a woman's shriek, and secondly by the shouts of an old man-servant who had appeared, in a half-dressed condition, at the window of Mr. Hasbrouck's room, crying, "Murder! murder!"

But when I had crossed the threshold, I was astonished at the paucity of the facts to be gleaned from the inmates themselves. The old servitor, who was the first to talk, had only this account of the crime to give.

The family, which consisted of Mr. Hasbrouck, his wife, and three servants, had retired for the night at the usual hour and

* New York City.

under the usual auspices. At eleven o'clock the lights were all extinguished, and the whole household asleep, with the possible exception of Mr. Hasbrouck himself, who, being a man of large business responsibilities, was frequently troubled with insomnia.

Suddenly Mrs. Hasbrouck woke with a start. Had she dreamed the words that were ringing in her ears, or had they been actually uttered in her hearing? They were short, sharp words, full of terror and menace, and she had nearly satisfied herself that she had imagined them, when there came, from somewhere near the door, a sound she neither understood nor could interpret, but which filled her with inexplicable terror, and made her afraid to breathe, or even to stretch forth her hand towards her husband, whom she supposed to be sleeping at her side. At length another strange sound, which she was sure was not due to her imagination, drove her to make an attempt to rouse him, when she was horrified to find that she was alone in the bed, and her husband nowhere within reach.

Filled now with something more than nervous apprehension, she flung herself to the floor, and tried to penetrate, with frenzied glances, the surrounding darkness. But the blinds and shutters both having been carefully closed by Mr. Hasbrouck before retiring, she found this impossible, and she was about to sink in terror to the floor, when she heard a low gasp on the other side of the room, followed by the suppressed cry:

"God! what have I done!"

The voice was a strange one, but before the fear aroused by this fact could culminate in a shriek of dismay, she caught the sound of retreating footsteps, and, eagerly listening, she heard them descend the stairs and depart by the front door.

Had she known what had occurred—had there been no doubt in her mind as to what lay in the darkness on the other side of the room—it is likely that, at the noise caused by the closing front door, she would have made at once for the balcony that opened out from the window before which she was standing, and taken one look at the flying figure below. But her uncertainty as to what lay hidden from her by the darkness chained her feet to the floor, and there is no knowing when she would have moved, if a carriage had not at that moment passed down Astor Place, bringing with it a sense of companionship which broke the spell that held her, and gave her strength to light the gas, which was in ready reach of her hand.

As the sudden blaze illuminated the room, revealing in a

burst the old familiar walls and well-known pieces of furniture, she felt for a moment as if released from some heavy nightmare and restored to the common experiences of life. But in another instant her former dread returned, and she found herself quaking at the prospect of passing around the foot of the bed into that part of the room which was as yet hidden from her eyes.

But the desperation which comes with great crises finally drove her from her retreat; and, creeping slowly forward, she cast one glance at the floor before her, when she found her worst fears realized by the sight of the dead body of her husband lying prone before the open doorway, with a bullet-hole in his forehead.

Her first impulse was to shriek, but, by a powerful exercise of will, she checked herself, and, ringing frantically for the servants who slept on the top floor of the house, flew to the nearest window and endeavored to open it. But the shutters had been bolted so securely by Mr. Hasbrouck, in his endeavor to shut out light and sound, that by the time she had succeeded in unfastening them, all trace of the flying murderer had vanished from the street.

Sick with grief and terror, she stepped back into the room just as the three frightened servants descended the stairs. As they appeared in the open doorway, she pointed at her husband's inanimate form, and then, as if suddenly realizing in its full force the calamity which had befallen her, she threw up her arms, and sank forward to the floor in a dead faint.

The two women rushed to her assistance, but the old butler, bounding over the bed, sprang to the window, and shrieked his alarm to the street.

In the interim that followed, Mrs. Hasbrouck was revived, and the master's body laid decently on the bed; but no pursuit was made, nor any inquiries started likely to assist me in establishing the identity of the assailant.

Indeed, every one, both in the house and out, seemed dazed by the unexpected catastrophe, and as no one had any suspicions to offer as to the probable murderer, I had a difficult task before me.

I began, in the usual way, by inspecting the scene of the murder. I found nothing in the room, or in the condition of the body itself, which added an iota to the knowledge already obtained. That Mr. Hasbrouck had been in bed; that he had risen upon hearing a noise; and that he had been shot before reaching the door, were self-evident facts. But there was nothing to

guide me further. The very simplicity of the circumstances caused a dearth of clues, which made the difficulty of procedure as great as any I ever encountered.

My search through the hall and down the stairs elicited nothing; and an investigation of the bolts and bars by which the house was secured, assured me that the assassin had either entered by the front door, or had already been secreted in the house when it was locked up for the night.

"I shall have to trouble Mrs. Hasbrouck for a short interview," I hereupon announced to the trembling old servitor, who had followed me like a dog about the house.

He made no demur, and in a few minutes I was ushered into the presence of the newly made widow, who sat quite alone, in a large chamber in the rear. As I crossed the threshold she looked up, and I encountered a good plain face, without the shadow of guile in it.

"Madame," said I, "I have not come to disturb you. I will ask two or three questions only, and then leave you to your grief. I am told that some words came from the assassin before he delivered his fatal shot. Did you hear these distinctly enough to tell me what they were?"

"I was sound asleep," said she, "and dreamt, as I thought, that a fierce, strange voice cried somewhere to someone: 'Ah! you did not expect me!' But I dare not say that these words were really uttered to my husband, for he was not the man to call forth hate, and only a man in the extremity of passion could address such an exclamation in such a tone as rings in my memory in connection with the fatal shot which woke me."

"But that shot was not the work of a friend," I argued. "If, as these words seem to prove, the assassin had some other motive than gain in his assault, then your husband had an enemy, though you never suspected it."

"Impossible!" was her steady reply, uttered in the most convincing tone. "The man who shot him was a common burglar, and, frightened at having been betrayed into murder, fled without looking for booty. I am sure I heard him cry out in terror and remorse: 'God! what have I done!'"

"Was that before you left the side of the bed?"

"Yes; I did not move from my place till I heard the front door close. I was paralyzed by my fear and dread."

"Are you in the habit of trusting to the security of a latch-lock only in the fastening of your front door at night? I am

told that the big key was not in the lock, and that the bolt at the bottom of the door was not drawn."

"The bolt at the bottom of the door is never drawn. Mr. Hasbrouck was so good a man he never mistrusted any one. That is why the big lock was not fastened. The key, not working well, he took it some days ago to the locksmith, and when the latter failed to return it, he laughed, and said he thought no one would ever think of meddling with his front door."

"Is there more than one night-key to your house?" I now asked.

She shook her head.

"And when did Mr. Hasbrouck last use his?"

"To-night, when he came home from prayer-meeting," she answered, and burst into tears.

Her grief was so real and her loss so recent that I hesitated to afflict her by further questions. So returning to the scene of the tragedy, I stepped out upon the balcony which ran in front. Soft voices instantly struck my ears. The neighbors on either side were grouped in front of their own windows, and were exchanging the remarks natural under the circumstances. I paused, as in duty bound, and listened. But I heard nothing worth recording, and would have instantly reëntered the house if I had not been impressed by the appearance of a very graceful woman who stood at my right. She was clinging to her husband, who was gazing at one of the pillars before him in a strange, fixed way which astonished me till he attempted to move, and then I saw that he was blind. Instantly I remembered that there lived in this row a blind doctor, equally celebrated for his skill and for his uncommon personal attractions, and, greatly interested not only in his affliction, but in the sympathy evinced for him by his young and affectionate wife, I stood still till I heard her say in the soft and appealing tones of love:

"Come in, Constant; you have heavy duties for to-morrow, and you should get a few hours' rest, if possible."

He came from the shadow of the pillar, and for one minute I saw his face with the lamplight shining full upon it. It was as regular of feature as a sculptured Adonis, and it was as white.

"Sleep!" he repeated, in the measured tones of deep but suppressed feeling. "Sleep! with murder on the other side of the wall!" And he stretched out his hands in a dazed way that insensibly accentuated the horror I myself felt of the crime which had so lately taken place in the room behind me.

She, noting the movement, took one of the groping hands in her own and drew him gently towards her.

"This way," she urged; and, guiding him into the house, she closed the window and drew down the shades, making the street seem darker by the loss of her exquisite presence.

This may seem a digression, but I was at the time a young man of thirty, and much under the dominion of woman's beauty. I was therefore slow in leaving the balcony, and persistent in my wish to learn something of this remarkable couple before leaving Mr. Hasbrouck's house.

The story told me was very simple. Dr. Zabriskie had not been born blind, but had become so after a grievous illness which had stricken him down soon after he received his diploma. Instead of succumbing to an affliction which would have daunted most men, he expressed his intention of practising his profession, and soon became so successful in it that he found no difficulty in establishing himself in one of the best-paying quarters of the city. Indeed, his intuition seemed to have developed in a remarkable degree after his loss of sight, and he seldom, if ever, made a mistake in diagnosis. Considering this fact, and the personal attractions which gave him distinction, it was no wonder that he soon became a popular physician whose presence was a benefaction and whose word a law.

He had been engaged to be married at the time of his illness, and, when he learned what was likely to be its results, had offered to release the young lady from all obligation to him. But she would not be released, and they were married. This had taken place some five years previous to Mr. Hasbrouck's death, three of which had been spent by them in Lafayette Place.

So much for the beautiful woman next door.

There being absolutely no clue to the assailant of Mr. Hasbrouck, I naturally looked forward to the inquest for some evidence upon which to work. But there seemed to be no underlying facts to this tragedy. The most careful study into the habits and conduct of the deceased brought nothing to light save his general beneficence and rectitude, nor was there in his history or in that of his wife any secret or hidden obligation calculated to provoke any such act of revenge as murder. Mrs. Hasbrouck's surmise that the intruder was simply a burglar, and that she had rather imagined than heard the words that pointed to the shooting as a deed of vengeance, soon gained general credence. But, though the police worked long and arduously in this new direc-

tion, their efforts were without fruit, and the case bade fair to remain an unsolvable mystery.

But the deeper the mystery the more persistently does my mind cling to it, and some five months after the matter had been delegated to oblivion, I found myself starting suddenly from sleep, with these words ringing in my ears:

"Who uttered the scream that gave the first alarm of Mr. Hasbrouck's violent death?"

I was in such a state of excitement that the perspiration stood out on my forehead. Mrs. Hasbrouck's story of the occurrence returned to me, and I remembered as distinctly as if she were then speaking, that she had expressly stated that she did not scream when confronted by the sight of her husband's dead body. But some one had screamed, and that very loudly. Who was it, then. One of the maids, startled by the sudden summons from below, or some one else—some involuntary witness of the crime, whose testimony had been suppressed at the inquest, by fear or influence?

The possibility of having come upon a clue even at this late day, so fired my ambition, that I took the first opportunity of revisiting Lafayette Place. Choosing such persons as I thought most open to my questions, I learned that there were many who could testify to having heard a woman's shrill scream on that memorable night just prior to the alarm given by old Cyrus; but no one could tell from whose lips it had come. One fact, however, was immediately settled. It had not been the result of the servant-women's fears. Both of the girls were positive that they had uttered no sound, nor had they themselves heard any, till Cyrus rushed to the window with his wild cries. As the scream, by whomever given, was uttered before they descended the stairs, I was convinced by these assurances that it had issued from one of the front windows, and not from the rear of the house, where their own rooms lay. Could it be that it had sprung from the adjoining dwelling, and that—My thoughts went no further, but I made up my mind to visit the doctor's house at once.

It took some courage to do this, for the doctor's wife had attended the inquest, and her beauty, seen in broad daylight, had worn such an aspect of mingled sweetness and dignity, that I hesitated to encounter it under any circumstances likely to disturb its pure serenity. But a clue, once grasped, cannot be lightly set aside by a true detective. and it would have taken

more than a woman's frown to stop me at this point. So I rang Dr. Zabriskie's bell.

I am seventy years old now and am no longer daunted by the charms of a beautiful woman, but I confess that when I found myself in the fine reception parlor on the first-floor, I experienced no little trepidation at the prospect of the interview that awaited me. But as soon as the fine commanding form of the doctor's wife crossed the threshold, I recovered my senses and surveyed her with as direct a gaze as my position allowed. For her aspect bespoke a degree of emotion that astonished me; and even before I spoke I perceived her to be trembling, though she was a woman of no little natural dignity and self-possession.

"I seem to know your face," she said, advancing courteously towards me, "but your name"—and here she glanced at the card she held in her hand—"is totally unfamiliar to me."

"I think you saw me some eighteen months ago," said I. "I am the detective who gave testimony at the inquest which was held over the remains of Mr. Hasbrouck."

I had not meant to startle her, but at this introduction of myself I saw her naturally pale cheek turn paler, and her fine eyes, which had been fixed curiously upon me, gradually sink to the floor.

"Great heaven!" thought I, "what is this I have stumbled upon!"

"I do not understand what business you can have with me," she presently remarked, with a show of gentle indifference that did not in the least deceive me.

"I do not wonder," I rejoined. "The crime which took place next door is almost forgotten by the community, and even if it were not, I am sure you would find it difficult to conjecture the nature of the question I have to put to you."

"I am surprised," she began, rising in her involuntary emotion and thereby compelling me to rise also. "How can you have any question to ask me on this subject? Yet if you have," she continued, with a rapid change of manner that touched my heart in spite of myself, "I shall, of course, do my best to answer you."

There are women whose sweetest tones and most charming smiles only serve to awaken distrust in men of my calling; but Mrs. Zabriskie was not of this number. Her face was beautiful, but it was also candid in expression, and beneath the agitation

which palpably disturbed her, I was sure there lurked nothing either wicked or false. Yet I held fast by the clue which I had grasped, as it were, in the dark, and without knowing whither I was tending, much less whither I was leading her, I proceeded to say:

"The question which I presume to put to you as the next-door neighbor of Mr. Hasbrouck, is this: Who was the woman who screamed out so loudly that the whole neighborhood heard her on the night of that gentleman's assassination?"

The gasp she gave answered my question in a way she little realized, and, struck as I was by the impalpable links that had led me to the threshold of this hitherto unsolvable mystery, I was about to press my advantage and ask another question, when she quickly started forward and laid her hand on my lips.

Astonished, I looked at her inquiringly, but her head was turned aside, and her eyes, fixed upon the door, showed the greatest anxiety. Instantly I realized what she feared. Her husband was entering the house, and she dreaded lest his ears should catch a word of our conversation.

Not knowing what was in her mind, and unable to realize the importance of the moment to her, I yet listened to the advance of her blind husband with an almost painful interest. Would he enter the room where we were, or would he pass immediately to his office in the rear? She seemed to wonder, too, and almost held her breath as he neared the door, paused, and stood in the open doorway, with his ear turned toward us.

As for myself, I remained perfectly still, gazing at his face in mingled surprise and apprehension. For besides its beauty, which was of a marked order, I have already observed, it had a touching expression which irresistibly aroused both pity and interest in the spectator. This may have been the result of his affliction, or it may have sprung from some deeper cause; but, whatever its source, this look in his face produced a strong impression upon me and interested me at once in his personality. Would he enter? Or would he pass on? Her look of silent appeal showed me in which direction her wishes lay, but while I answered her glance by complete silence, I was conscious in some indistinct way that the business I had undertaken would be better furthered by his entrance.

The blind have been often said to possess a sixth sense in place of the one they have lost. Though I am sure we made no noise, I soon perceived that he was aware of our presence. Stepping

hastily forward he said, in the high and vibrating tone of restrained passion:

"Helen, are you here?"

For a moment I thought she did not mean to answer, but knowing doubtless from experience the impossibility of deceiving him, she answered with a cheerful assent, dropping her hand as she did so from before my lips.

He heard the slight rustle which accompanied the movement, and a look I found it hard to comprehend flashed over his features, altering his expression so completely that he seemed another man.

"You have some one with you," he declared, advancing another step, but with none of the uncertainty which usually accompanies the movements of the blind. "Some dear friend," he went on, with an almost sarcastic emphasis and a forced smile that had little of gaiety in it.

The agitated and distressed blush which answered him could have but one interpretation. He suspected that her hand had been clasped in mine, and she perceived his thought and knew that I perceived it also.

Drawing herself up, she moved towards him, saying in a sweet womanly tone that to me spoke volumes:

"It is no friend, Constant, not even an acquaintance. The person whom I now present to you is an agent from the police. He is here upon a trivial errand which will be soon finished, when I will join you in your office."

I knew she was but taking a choice between two evils. That she would have saved her husband the knowledge of a detective's presence in the house, if her self-respect would have allowed it, but neither she nor I anticipated the effect which this presentation produced upon him.

"A police officer," he repeated, staring with his sightless eyes, as if, in his eagerness to see, he half hoped his lost sense would return. "He can have no trivial errand here; he has been sent by God Himself to——"

"Let me speak for you," hastily interposed his wife, springing to his side and clasping his arm with a fervor that was equally expressive of appeal and command. Then turning to me, she explained: "Since Mr. Hasbrouck's unaccountable death, my husband has been laboring under an hallucination which I have only to mention for you to recognize its perfect absurdity. He thinks —oh! do not look like that, Constant; you know it is an halluci-

nation which must vanish the moment we drag it into broad daylight—that he—he, the best man in all the world, was himself the assailant of Mr. Hasbrouck."

"Good God!"

"I say nothing of the impossibility of this being so," she went on in a fever of expostulation. "He is blind, and could not have delivered such a shot even if he had desired to; besides, he had no weapon. But the inconsistency of the thing speaks for itself, and should assure him that his mind is unbalanced and that he is merely suffering from a shock that was greater than we realized. He is a physician and has had many such instances in his own practise. Why, he was very much attached to Mr. Hasbrouck! They were the best of friends, and though he insists that he killed him, he cannot give any reason for the deed."

At these words the doctor's face grew stern, and he spoke like an automaton repeating some fearful lesson.

"I killed him. I went to his room and deliberately shot him. I had nothing against him, and my remorse is extreme. Arrest me, and let me pay the penalty of my crime. It is the only way in which I can obtain peace."

Shocked beyond all power of self-control by this repetition of what she evidently considered the unhappy ravings of a madman, she let go his arm and turned upon me in frenzy.

"Convince him!" she cried. "Convince him by your questions that he never could have done this fearful thing."

I was laboring under great excitement myself, for I felt my youth against me in a matter of such tragic consequence. Besides, I agreed with her that he was in a distempered state of mind, and I hardly knew how to deal with one so fixed in his hallucination and with so much intelligence to support it. But the emergency was great, for he was holding out his wrists in the evident expectation of my taking him into instant custody; and the sight was killing his wife, who had sunk on the floor between us, in terror and anguish.

"You say you killed Mr. Hasbrouck," I began. "Where did you get your pistol, and what did you do with it after you left his house?"

"My husband had no pistol; never had any pistol," put in Mrs. Zabriskie, with vehement assertion. "If I had seen him with such a weapon——"

"I threw it away. When I left the house, I cast it as far

from me as possible, for I was frightened at what I had done, horribly frightened."

"No pistol was ever found," I answered, with a smile, forgetting for the moment that he could not see. "If such an instrument had been found in the street after a murder of such consequence it certainly would have been brought to the police."

"You forget that a good pistol is valuable property," he went on stolidly. "Some one came alone before the general alarm was given; and seeing such a treasure lying on the sidewalk, picked it up and carried it off. Not being honest, he preferred to keep it to drawing the attention of the police upon himself."

"Hum, perhaps," said I; "but where did you get it? Surely you can tell where you procured such a weapon, if, as your wife intimates, you did not own one."

"I bought it that self-same night of a friend; a friend whom I will not name, since he resides no longer in this country. I" —He paused; intense passion was in his face; he turned towards his wife, and a low cry escaped him, which made her look up in fear.

"I do not wish to go into any particulars," said he. "God forsook me, and I committed a horrible crime. When I am punished, perhaps peace will return to me and happiness to her. I would not wish her to suffer too long or too bitterly for my sin."

"Constant!" What love was in the cry! and what despair! It seemed to move him and turn his thoughts for a moment into a different channel.

"Poor child!" he murmured, stretching out his hands by an irresistible impulse towards her. But the change was but momentary, and he was soon again the stern and determined self-accuser. "Are you going to take me before a magistrate?" he asked. "If so, I have a few duties to perform which you are welcome to witness."

"I have no warrant," I said; "besides, I am scarcely the one to take such a responsibility upon myself. If, however, you persist in your declaration, I will communicate with my superiors, who will take such action as they think best."

"That will be still more satisfactory to me," said he; "for though I have many times contemplated giving myself up to the authorities, I have still much to do before I can leave my home

and practise without injury to others. Good-day; when you want me, you will find me here."

He was gone, and the poor young wife was left crouching on the floor alone. Pitying her shame and terror, I ventured to remark that it was not an uncommon thing for a man to confess to a crime he had never committed, and assured her that the matter would be inquired into very carefully before any attempt was made upon his liberty.

She thanked me, and, slowly rising, tried to regain her equanimity; but the manner as well as the matter of her husband's self-condemnation was too overwhelming in its nature for her to recover readily from her emotions.

"I have long dreaded this," she acknowledged. "For months I have foreseen that he would make some rash communication or insane avowal. If I had dared, I would have consulted some physician about this hallucination of his; but he was so sane on other points that I hesitated to give my dreadful secret to the world. I kept hoping that time and his daily pursuits would have their effect and restore him to himself. But his illusion grows, and now I fear that nothing will ever convince him that he did not commit the deed of which he accuses himself. If he were not blind I would have more hope, but the blind have so much time for brooding."

"I think he had better be indulged in his fancies for the present," I ventured. "If he is laboring under an illusion it might be dangerous to cross him."

"If?" she echoed in an indescribable tone of amazement and dread. "Can you for a moment harbor the idea that he has spoken the truth?"

"Madame," I returned, with something of the cynicism of my later years, "what caused you to give such an unearthly scream just before this murder was made known to the neighborhood?"

She stared, paled, and finally began to tremble, not, as I now believe, at the insinuation latent in my words, but at the doubts which my question aroused in her own breast.

"Did I?" she asked; then with a great burst of candor, which seemed inseparable from her nature, she continued: "Why do I try to mislead you or deceive myself? I did give a shriek just before the alarm was raised next door; but it was not from any knowledge I had of a crime having been committed, but because I unexpectedly saw before me my husband whom I supposed to be on his way to Poughkeepsie. He was looking very

pale and strange, and for a moment I thought I was beholding his ghost. But he soon explained his appearance by saying that he had fallen from the train and had been only saved by a miracle from being dismembered; and I was just bemoaning his mishap and trying to calm him and myself, when that terrible shout was heard next door of 'Murder! murder!' Coming so soon after the shock he had himself experienced, it quite unnerved him, and I think we can date his mental disturbance from that moment. For he began almost immediately to take a morbid interest in the affair next door, though it was weeks, if not months, before he let a word fall of the nature of those you have just heard. Indeed it was not till I repeated to him some of the expressions he was continually letting fall in his sleep, that he commenced to accuse himself of crime and talk of retribution."

"You say that your husband frightened you on that night by appearing suddenly at the door when you thought him on his way to Poughkeepsie. Is Dr. Zabriskie in the habit of thus going and coming alone at an hour so late as this must have been?"

"You forget that to the blind, night is less full of perils than the day. Often and often has my husband found his way to his patients' houses alone after midnight; but on this especial evening he had Harry with him. Harry was his driver, and always accompanied him when he went any distance."

"Well, then," said I, "all we have to do is to summon Harry and hear what he has to say concerning this affair. He surely will know whether or not his master went into the house next door."

"Harry has left us," she said. "Dr. Zabriskie has another driver now. Besides (I have nothing to conceal from you), Harry was not with him when he returned to the house that evening, or the doctor would not have been without his portmanteau till the next day. Something—I have never known what—caused them to separate, and that is why I have no answer to give the doctor when he accuses himself of committing a deed on that night which is wholly out of keeping with every other act of his life."

"And have you never questioned Harry why they separated and why he allowed his master to come home alone after the shock he had received at the station?"

"I did not know there was any reason for doing so till long after he left us."

"And when did he leave?"

"That I do not remember. A few weeks or possibly a few days after that dreadful night."

"And where is he now?"

"Ah, that I have not the least means of knowing. But," she suddenly cried, "what do you want of Harry? If he did not follow Dr. Zabriskie to his own door, he could tell us nothing that would convince my husband that he is laboring under an illusion."

"But he might tell us something which would convince us that Dr. Zabriskie was not himself after the accident, that he——"

"Hush!" came from her lips in imperious tones. "I will not believe that he shot Mr. Hasbrouck, even if you prove him to have been insane at the time. How could he? My husband is blind. It would take a man of very keen sight to force himself into a house that was closed for the night, and kill a man in the dark at one shot."

"Rather," cried a voice from the doorway, "it is only a blind man who could do this. Those who trust to eyesight must be able to catch some glimpse of the mark they aim at, and this room, as I have been told, was without a glimmer of light. But the blind trust to sound, and as Mr. Hasbrouck spoke——"

"Oh!" burst from the horrified wife, "is there no one to stop him when he speaks like that?"

II

When I related to my superiors the details of the foregoing interview, two of them coincided with the wife in thinking that Dr. Zabriskie was in an irresponsible condition of mind which made any statement of his questionable. But the third seemed disposed to argue the matter, and, casting me an inquiring look, seemed to ask what my opinion was on the subject. Answering him as if he had spoken, I gave my conclusion as follows: That whether insane or not, Dr. Zabriskie had fired the shot which terminated Mr. Hasbrouck's life.

It was the inspector's own idea, but it was not shared in by the

others, one of whom had known the doctor for years. Accordingly they compromised by postponing all opinion till they had themselves interrogated the doctor, and I was detailed to bring him before them the next afternoon.

He came without reluctance, his wife accompanying him. In the short time which elapsed between their leaving Lafayette Place and entering headquarters, I embraced the opportunity of observing them, and I found the study equally exciting and interesting. His face was calm but hopeless, and his eye, which should have shown a wild glimmer if there was truth in his wife's hypothesis, was dark and unfathomable, but neither frenzied nor uncertain. He spoken but once and listened to nothing, though now and then his wife moved as if to attract his attention, and once even stole her hand toward his, in the tender hope that he would feel its approach and accept her sympathy. But he was deaf as well as blind; and sat wrapped up in thoughts which she, I know, would have given worlds to penetrate.

Her countenance was not without its mystery also. She showed in every lineament passionate concern and misery, and a deep tenderness from which the element of fear was not absent. But she, as well as he, betrayed that some misunderstanding, deeper than any I had previously suspected, drew its intangible veil between them and made the near proximity in which they sat, at once a heart-piercing delight and unspeakable pain. What was this misunderstanding? and what was the character of the fear that modified her every look of love in his direction? Her perfect indifference to my presence proved that it was not connected with the position in which he had put himself towards the police by his voluntary confession of crime, nor could I thus interpret the expression of frantic question which now and then contracted her features, as she raised her eyes towards his sightless orbs, and strove to read, in his firm-set lips, the meaning of those assertions she could only ascribe to a loss of reason.

The stopping of the carriage seemed to awaken both from thoughts that separated rather than united them. He turned his face in her direction, and she, stretching forth her hand, prepared to lead him from the carriage, without any of that display of timidity which had been previously evident in her manner.

As his guide, she seemed to fear nothing; as his lover, everything.

"There is another and a deeper tragedy underlying the out-

ward and obvious one," was my inward conclusion, as I followed them into the presence of the gentlemen awaiting them.

Dr. Zabriskie's appearance was a shock to those who knew him; so was his manner, which was calm, straightforward, and quietly determined.

"I shot Mr. Hasbrouck," was his steady affirmation, given without any show of frenzy or desperation. "If you ask me why I did it, I cannot answer; if you ask me how, I am ready to state all that I know concerning the matter."

"But, Dr. Zabriskie," interposed his friend, "the why is the most important thing for us to consider just now. If you really desire to convince us that you committed the dreadful crime of killing a totally inoffensive man, you should give us some reason for an act so opposed to all your instincts and general conduct."

But the doctor continued unmoved:

"I had no reason for murdering Mr. Hasbrouck. A hundred questions can elicit no other reply; you had better keep to the how."

A deep-drawn breath from the wife answered the looks of the three gentlemen to whom this suggestion was offered. "You see," that breath seemed to protest, "that he is not in his right mind."

I began to waver in my own opinion, and yet the intuition which has served me in cases as seemingly impenetrable as this, bade me beware of following the general judgment.

"Ask him to inform you how he got into the house," I whispered to Inspector D——, who sat nearest me.

Immediately the Inspector put the question I had suggested:

"By what means did you enter Mr. Hasbrouck's house at so late an hour as this murder occurred?"

The blind doctor's head fell forward on his breast, and he hesitated for the first and only time.

"You will not believe me," said he; "but the door was ajar when I came to it. Such things make crime easy; it is the only excuse I have to offer for this dreadful deed."

The front door of a respectable citizen's house ajar at half-past eleven at night. It was a statement that fixed in all minds the conviction of the speaker's irresponsibility. Mrs. Zabriskie's brow cleared, and her beauty became for a moment dazzling as she held out her hands in irrepressible relief towards those who were interrogating her husband. I alone kept my impassibility.

A possible explanation of this crime had flashed like lightning across my mind; an explanation from which I inwardly recoiled, even while I was forced to consider it.

"Dr. Zabriskie," remarked the inspector, who was most friendly to him, "such old servants as those kept by Mr. Hasbrouck do not leave the front door ajar at twelve o'clock at night."

"Yet ajar it was," repeated the blind doctor, with quiet emphasis; "and finding it so, I went in. When I came out again, I closed it. Do you wish me to swear to what I say? If so, I am ready."

What could we reply? To see this splendid-looking man, hallowed by an affliction so great that in itself it called forth the compassion of the most indifferent, accusing himself of a cold-blooded crime, in tones that sounded dispassionate because of the will that forced their utterance, was too painful in itself for us to indulge in any unnecessary words. Compassion took the place of curiosity, and each and all of us turned involuntary looks of pity upon the young wife pressing so eagerly to his side.

"For a blind man," ventured one, "the assault was both deft and certain. Are you accustomed to Mr. Hasbrouck's house, that you found your way with so little difficulty to his bedroom?"

"I am accustomed——" he began.

But here his wife broke in with irrepressible passion:

"He is not accustomed to that house. He has never been beyond the first door. Why, why do you question him? Do you not see——"

His hand was on her lips.

"Hush!" he commanded. "You know my skill in moving about a house; how I sometimes deceive those who do not know me into believing that I can see, by the readiness with which I avoid obstacles and find my way even in strange and untried scenes. Do not try to make them think I am not in my right mind, or you will drive me into the very condition you deprecate."

His face, rigid, cold and set, looked like that of a mask. Hers, drawn with horror and filled with question that was fast taking the form of doubt, bespoke an awful tragedy from which more than one of us recoiled.

"Can you shoot a man dead without seeing him?" asked the superintendent, with painful effort.

"Give me a pistol and I will show you," was the quick reply.

A low cry came from the wife. In a drawer near to every one of us there lay a pistol, but no one moved to take it out. There was a look in the doctor's eye which made us fear to trust him with a pistol just then.

"We will accept your assurance that you possess a skill beyond that of most men," returned the superintendent. And beckoning me forward, he whispered: "This is a case for the doctors and not for the police. Remove him quietly, and notify Dr. Southyard of what I say."

But Dr. Zabriskie, who seemed to have an almost supernatural acuteness of hearing, gave a violent start at this and spoke up for the first time with real passion in his voice:

"No, no, I pray you. I can bear anything but that. Remember, gentlemen, that I am blind; that I cannot see who is about me; that my life would be a torture if I felt myself surrounded by spies watching to catch some evidence of madness in me. Rather conviction at once, death, dishonor, and obloquy. These I have incurred. These I have brought upon myself by crime, but not this worse fate—oh! not this worse fate."

His passion was so intense and yet so confined within the bounds of decorum, that we felt strangely impressed by it. Only the wife stood transfixed, with the dread growing in her heart, till her white, waxen visage seemed even more terrible to contemplate than his passion-distorted one.

"It is not strange that my wife thinks me demented," the doctor continued, as if afraid of the silence that answered him. "But it is your business to discriminate, and you should know a sane man when you see him."

Inspector D—— no longer hesitated.

"Very well," said he, "give us the least proof that your assertions are true, and we will lay your case before the prosecuting attorney."

"Proof? Is not a man's word——"

"No man's confession is worth much without some evidence to support it. In your case there is none. You cannot even produce the pistol with which you assert yourself to have committed the deed."

"True, true. I was frightened by what I had done, and the instinct of self-preservation led me to rid myself of the weapon in any way I could. But some one found this pistol; some one picked it up from the sidewalk of Lafayette Place on that fatal

night. Advertise for it. Offer a reward. I will give you the money." Suddenly he appeared to realize how all this sounded. "Alas!" cried he, "I know the story seems improbable; all I say seems improbable; but it is not the probable things that happen in this life, but the improbable, as you should know, who every day dig deep into the heart of human affairs."

Were these the ravings of insanity? I began to understand the wife's terror.

"I bought the pistol," he went on, "of—alas! I cannot tell you his name. Everything is against me. I cannot adduce one proof; yet she, even she, is beginning to fear that my story is true. I know it by her silence, a silence that yawns between us like a deep and unfathomable gulf."

But at these words her voice rang out with passionate vehemence.

"No, no; it is false! I will never believe that your hands have been plunged in blood. You are my own pure-hearted Constant, cold, perhaps, and stern, but with no guilt upon your conscience, save in your own wild imagination."

"Helen, you are no friend to me," he declared, pushing her gently aside. "Believe me innocent, but say nothing to lead these others to doubt my word."

And she said no more, but her looks spoke volumes.

The result was that he was not detained, though he prayed for instant commitment. He seemed to dread his own home, and the surveillance to which he instinctively knew he would henceforth be subjected. To see him shrink from his wife's hand as she strove to lead him from the room was sufficiently painful; but the feeling thus aroused was nothing to that with which we observed the keen and agonized expectancy of his look as he turned and listened for the steps of the officer who followed him.

"I shall never again know whether or not I am alone," was his final observation as he left our presence.

* * * * * * *

I said nothing to my superiors of the thoughts I had had while listening to the above interrogatories. A theory had presented itself to my mind which explained in some measure the mysteries of the doctor's conduct, but I wished for time and opportunity to test its reasonableness before submitting it to their higher judgment. And these seemed likely to be given me, for the inspectors continued divided in their opinion of the

blind physician's guilt, and the district-attorney, when told of the affair, pooh-poohed it without mercy, and declined to stir in the matter unless some tangible evidence were forthcoming to substantiate the poor doctor's self-accusations.

"If guilty, why does he shrink from giving his motives," said he, "and if so anxious to go to the gallows, why does he suppress the very facts calculated to send him there? He is as mad as a March hare, and it is to an asylum he should go and not to jail."

In this conclusion I failed to agree with him, and as time wore on my suspicions took shape and finally ended in a fixed conviction. Dr. Zabriskie had committed the crime he avowed, but —let me proceed a little further with my story before I reveal what lies beyond that "but."

Notwithstanding Dr. Zabriskie's almost frenzied appeal for solitude, a man had been placed in surveillance over him in the shape of a young doctor skilled in the diseases of the brain. This man communicated more or less with the police, and one morning I received from him the following extracts from the diary he had been ordered to keep:

"The doctor is settling into a deep melancholy from which he tries to rise at times, but with only indifferent success. Yesterday he rode around to all his patients for the purpose of withdrawing his services on the plea of illness. But he still keeps his office open, and to-day I had the opportunity of witnessing his reception and treatment of the many sufferers who came to him for aid. I think he was conscious of my presence, though an attempt had been made to conceal it. For the listening look never left his face from the moment he entered the room, and once he rose and passed quickly from wall to wall, groping with outstretched hands into every nook and corner, and barely escaping contact with the curtain behind which I was hidden. But if he suspected my presence, he showed no displeasure at it, wishing perhaps for a witness to his skill in the treatment of disease.

"And truly I never beheld a finer manifestation of practical insight in cases of a more or less baffling nature than I beheld in him to-day. He is certainly a most wonderful physician, and I feel bound to record that his mind is as clear for business as if no shadow had fallen upon it.

"Dr. Zabriskie loves his wife, but in a way that tortures both himself and her. If she is gone from the house he is wretched, and yet when she returns he often forbears to speak to her, or if he does speak, it is with a constraint that hurts her more than

his silence. I was present when she came in to-day. Her step, which had been eager on the stairway, flagged as she approached the room, and he naturally noted the change and gave his own interpretation to it. His face, which had been very pale, flushed suddenly, and a nervous trembling seized him, which he sought in vain to hide. But by the time her tall and beautiful figure stood in the doorway he was his usual self again in all but the expression of his eyes, which stared straight before him in agony of longing only to be observed in those who have once seen.

"'Where have you been, Helen?' he asked, as, contrary to his wont, he moved to meet her.

"'To my mother's, to Arnold & Constable's, and to the hospital, as you requested,' was her quick answer, made without faltering or embarrassment.

"He stepped still nearer and took her hand, and as he did so my physician's eye noted how his finger lay over her pulse in seeming unconsciousness.

"'Nowhere else?' he queried.

"She smiled the saddest kind of smile and shook her head; then, remembering that he could not see this movement, she cried in a wistful tone:

"'Nowhere else, Constant; I was too anxious to get back.'

"I expected him to drop her hand at this, but he did not; and his finger still rested on her pulse.

"'And whom did you see while you were gone?' he continued.

"She told him, naming over several names.

"'You must have enjoyed yourself,' was his cold comment, as he let go her hand and turned away. But his manner showed relief, and I could not but sympathize with the pitiable situation of a man who found himself forced to means like these for probing the heart of his young wife.

"Yet when I turned towards her I realized her position was but little happier than his. Tears are no strangers to her eyes, but those that welled up at this moment seemed to possess a bitterness that promised but little peace for her future. Yet she quickly dried them and busied herself with ministrations for his comfort.

"If I am any judge of woman, Helen Zabriskie is superior to most of her sex. That her husband mistrusts her is evident, but whether this is the result of the stand she has taken in his regard, or only a manifestation of dementia, I have as yet been unable to

determine. I dread to leave them alone together, and yet when I presume to suggest that she should be on her guard in her interviews with him, she smiles very placidly and tells me that nothing would give her greater joy than to see him lift his hand against her, for that would argue that he is not accountable for his deeds or for his assertions.

"Yet it would be a grief to see her injured by this passionate and unhappy man.

"You have said that you wanted all the details I could give; so I feel bound to say that Dr. Zabriskie tries to be considerate of his wife, though he often fails in the attempt. When she offers herself as his guide, or assists him with his mail, or performs any of the many acts of kindness by which she continually manifests her sense of his affliction, he thanks her with courtesy and often with kindness, yet I know she would willingly exchange all his set phrases for one fond embrace or impulsive smile of affection. That he is not in the full possession of his faculties would be too much to say, and yet upon what other hypothesis can we account for the inconsistencies of his conduct?

"I have before me two visions of mental suffering. At noon I passed the office door, and, looking within, saw the figure of Dr. Zabriskie seated in his great chair, lost in thought or deep in those memories which make an abyss in one's consciousness. His hands, which were clenched, rested upon the arms of his chair, and in one of them I detected a woman's glove, which I had no difficulty in recognizing as one of the pair worn by his wife this morning. He held it as a tiger might hold his prey or as a miser his gold, but his set features and sightless eyes betrayed that a conflict of emotions was waging within him, among which tenderness had but little share.

"Though alive, as he usually is, to every sound, he was too absorbed at this moment to notice my presence, though I had taken no pains to approach quietly. I therefore stood for a full minute watching him, till an irresistible sense of shame of thus spying upon a blind man in his moments of secret anguish seized upon me and I turned away. But not before I saw his features relax in a storm of passionate feeling, as he rained kisses after kisses on the senseless kid he had so long held in his motionless grasp. Yet when an hour later he entered the dining-room on his wife's arm, there was nothing in his manner to show that he had in any way changed in his attitude towards her.

"The other picture was more tragic still. I have no business with Mrs. Zabriskie's affairs; but as I passed upstairs to my room an hour ago, I caught a fleeting vision of her tall form, with the arms thrown up over her head in a paroxysm of feeling which made her as oblivious to my presence as her husband had been several hours before. Were the words that escaped her lips, 'Thank God we have no children!' or was this exclamation suggested to me by the passion and unrestrained impulse of her action?"

* * * * * * *

Side by side with these lines, I, Ebenezer Gryce, placed the following extracts from my own diary:

"Watched the Zabriskie mansion for five hours this morning, from the second story window of an adjoining hotel. Saw the doctor when he drove away on his round of visits, and saw him when he returned. A colored man accompanied him.

"To-day I followed Mrs. Zabriskie. I had a motive for this, the nature of which I think it wisest not to divulge. She went first to a house in Washington Place, where I am told her mother lives. Here she stayed for some time, after which she drove down to Canal Street, where she did some shopping, and later stopped at the hospital, into which I took the liberty of following her. She seemed to know many there, and passed from cot to cot with a smile in which I alone discerned the sadness of a broken heart. When she left, I left also, without having learned anything beyond the fact that Mrs. Zabriskie is one who does her duty in sorrow as in happiness. A rare and trustworthy woman I should say, and yet her husband does not trust her. Why?

"I have spent this day in accumulating details in regard to Dr. and Mrs. Zabriskie's life previous to the death of Mr. Hasbrouck. I learned from sources it would be unwise to quote just here, that Mrs. Zabriskie had not lacked enemies ready to charge her with coquetry; that while she had never sacrificed her dignity in public, more than one person had been heard to declare that Dr. Zabriskie was fortunate in being blind, since the sight of his wife's beauty would have but poorly compensated him for the pain he would have suffered in seeing how that beauty was admired.

"That all gossip is more or less tinged with exaggeration I

have no doubt, yet when a name is mentioned in connection with such stories, there is usually some truth at the bottom of them. And a name is mentioned in this case, though I do not think it worth my while to repeat it here; and loth as I am to recognize the fact, it is a name that carries with it doubts that might easily account for the husband's jealousy. True, I have found no one who dares to hint that she still continues to attract attention or to bestow smiles in any direction save where they legally belong. For since a certain memorable night which we all know, neither Dr. Zabriskie nor his wife have been seen save in their own domestic circle, and it is not into such scenes that this serpent, of which I have spoken, ever intrudes, nor is it in places of sorrow or suffering that his smile shines, or his fascinations flourish.

"And so one portion of my theory is proved to be sound. Dr. Zabriskie is jealous of his wife: whether with good cause or bad I am not prepared to decide; for her present attitude, clouded as it is by the tragedy in which she and her husband are both involved, must differ very much from that which she held when her life was unshadowed by doubt, and her admirers could be counted by the score.

"I have just found out where Harry is. As he is in service some miles up the river, I shall have to be absent from my post for several hours, but I consider the game well worth the candle.

"Light at last. I have seen Harry, and, by means known only to the police, have succeeded in making him talk. His story is substantially this: That on the night so often mentioned, he packed his master's portmanteau at eight o'clock and at ten called a carriage and rode with the doctor to the Twenty-ninth Street station. He was told to buy tickets for Poughkeepsie, where his master had been called in consultation, and, having done this, hurried back to join his master on the platform. They had walked together as far as the cars, and Dr. Zabriskie was just stepping on to the train when a man pushed himself hurriedly between them and whispered something into his master's ear, which caused him to fall back and lose his footing. Dr. Zabriskie's body slid half under the car, but he was withdrawn before any harm was done, though the cars gave a lurch at the moment which must have frightened him exceedingly, for his face was white when he rose to his feet, and when Harry offered to assist him again on to the train, he refused to

go, and said he would return home and not attempt to ride to Poughkeepsie that night.

"The gentleman, whom Harry now saw to be Mr. Stanton, an intimate friend of Dr. Zabriskie, smiled very queerly at this, and taking the doctor's arm led him away to a carriage. Harry naturally followed them, but the doctor, hearing his steps, turned and bade him, in a very peremptory tone, to take the omnibus home, and then, as if on second thought, told him to go to Poughkeepsie in his stead and explain to the people there that he was too shaken up by his mis-step to do his duty, and that he would be with them next morning. This seemed strange to Harry, but he had no reasons for disobeying his master's orders, and so rode to Poughkeepsie. But the doctor did not follow him the next day; on the contrary, he telegraphed for him to return, and when he got back dismissed him with a month's wages. This ended Harry's connection with the Zabriskie family.

"A simple story bearing out what the wife has already told us; but it furnishes a link which may prove invaluable. Mr. Stanton, whose first name is Theodore, knows the real reason why Dr. Zabriskie returned home on the night of the seventeenth of July, 1851. Mr. Stanton, consequently, I must see, and this shall be my business to-morrow.

"Checkmate! Theodore Stanton is not in this country. Though this points him out as the man from whom Dr. Zabriskie bought the pistol, it does not facilitate my work, which is becoming more and more difficult.

"Mr. Stanton's whereabouts are not even known to his most intimate friends. He sailed from this country most unexpectedly on the eighteenth of July a year ago, which was the day after the murder of Mr. Hasbrouck. It looks like a flight, especially as he has failed to maintain open communication even with his relatives. Was he the man who shot Mr. Hasbrouck? No; but he was the man who put the pistol in Dr. Zabriskie's hand that night, and, whether he did this with purpose or not, was evidently so alarmed at the catastrophe which followed that he took the first outgoing steamer to Europe. So far, all is clear, but there are mysteries yet to be solved, which will require my utmost tact. What if I should seek out the gentleman with whose name that of Mrs. Zabriskie has been linked, and see if I can in any way connect him with Mr. Stanton or the events of that night?

"Eureka! I have discovered that Mr. Stanton cherished a

mortal hatred for the gentleman above mentioned. It was a covert feeling, but no less deadly on that account; and while it never led him into any extravagances, it was of force sufficient to account for many a secret misfortune which happened to that gentleman. Now, if I can prove he was the Mephistopheles who whispered insinuations into the ear of our blind Faust, I may strike a fact that will lead me out of this maze.

"But how can I approach secrets so delicate without compromising the woman I feel bound to respect, if only for the devoted love she manifests for her unhappy husband!

"I shall have to appeal to Joe Smithers. This is something which I always hate to do, but as long as he will take money, and as long as he is fertile in resources for obtaining the truth from people I am myself unable to reach, so long must I make use of his cupidity and his genius. He is an honorable fellow in one way, and never retails as gossip what he acquires for our use. How will he proceed in this case, and by what tactics will he gain the very delicate information which we need? I own that I am curious to see.

"I shall really have to put down at length the incidents of this night. I always knew that Joe Smithers was invaluable to the police, but I really did not know he possessed talents of so high an order. He wrote me this morning that he had succeeded in getting Mr. T——'s promise to spend the evening with him, and advised me that if I desired to be present also, his own servant would not be at home, and that an opener of bottles would be required.

"As I was very anxious to see Mr. T—— with my own eyes, I accepted the invitation to play the spy upon a spy, and went at the proper hour to Mr. Smithers' rooms, which are in the University Building. I found them picturesque in the extreme. Piles of books stacked here and there to the ceiling made nooks and corners which could be quite shut off by a couple of old pictures that were set into movable frames that swung out or in at the whim or convenience of the owner.

"As I liked the dark shadows cast by these pictures, I pulled them both out, and made such other arrangements as appeared likely to facilitate the purpose I had in view; then I sat down and waited for the two gentlemen who were expected to come in together.

"They arrived almost immediately, whereupon I rose and played my part with all necessary discretion. While ridding

Mr. T—— of his overcoat, I stole a look at his face. It is not a handsome one, but it boasts of a gay, devil-may-care expression which doubtless makes it dangerous to many women, while his manners are especially attractive, and his voice the richest and most persuasive that I ever heard. I contrasted him, almost against my will, with Dr. Zabriskie, and decided that with most women the former's undoubted fascinations of speech and bearing would outweigh the latter's great beauty and mental endowments; but I doubted if they would with her.

"The conversation which immediately began was brilliant but desultory, for Mr. Smithers, with an airy lightness for which he is remarkable, introduced topic after topic, perhaps for the purpose of showing off Mr. T——'s versatility, and perhaps for the deeper and more sinister purpose of shaking the kaleidoscope of talk so thoroughly that the real topic which we were met to discuss should not make an undue impression on the mind of his guest.

"Meanwhile one, two, three bottles passed, and I saw Joe Smithers' eye grow calmer and that of Mr. T—— more brilliant and more uncertain. As the last bottle showed signs of failing, Joe cast me a meaning glance, and the real business of the evening began.

"I shall not attempt to relate the half-dozen failures which Joe made in endeavoring to elicit the facts we were in search of, without arousing the suspicion of his visitor. I am only going to relate the successful attempt. They had been talking now for some two hours, and I, who had long before been waved from their immediate presence, was hiding my curiosity and growing excitement behind one of the pictures, when suddenly I heard Joe say:

"'He has the most remarkable memory I ever met. He can tell to a day when any notable event occurred.'

"'Pshaw!' answered his companion, who, by-the-bye, was known to pride himself upon his own memory for dates, 'I can state where I went and what I did on every day in the year. That may not embrace what you call "notable events," but the memory required is all the more remarkable, is it not?'

"'Pooh!' was his friend's provoking reply, 'you are bluffing, Ben; I will never believe that.'

"Mr. T——, who had passed by this time into that state of intoxication which makes persistence in an assertion a duty as well as a pleasure, threw back his head and, as the wreaths of

smoke rose in airy spirals from his lips, reiterated his statement, and offered to submit to any test of his vaunted powers which the other might dictate.

"'You have a diary'——began Joe.

"'Which is at home,' completed the other.

"'Will you allow me to refer to it to-morrow, if I am suspicious of the accuracy of your recollections?'

"'Undoubtedly,' returned the other.

"'Very well, then, I will wager you a cool fifty that you cannot tell where you were between the hours of ten and eleven on a certain night which I will name.'

"'Done!' cried the other, bringing out his pocket-book and laying it on the table before him.

"Joe followed his example and then summoned me.

"'Write a date down here,' he commanded, pushing a piece of paper towards me, with a look as keen as the flash of a blade. 'Any date, man,' he added, as I appeared to hesitate in the embarrassment I thought natural under the circumstances. 'Put down day, month, and year, only don't go too far back; no farther than two years.'

"Smiling with the air of a flunkey admitted to the sports of his superiors, I wrote a line and laid it before Mr. Smithers, who at once pushed it with a careless gesture towards his companion. You can of course, guess the date I made use of: July 17, 1851. Mr. T——, who evidently looked upon this matter as mere play, flushed scarlet as he read these words, and for one instant looked as if he had rather flee our presence than answer Joe Smithers' nonchalant glance of inquiry.

"'I have given my word and will keep it,' he said at last, but with a look in my direction that sent me reluctantly back to my retreat. 'I don't suppose you want names,' he went on, 'that is, if anything I have to tell is of a delicate nature?'

"'Oh, no,' answered the other, 'only facts and places.'

"'I don't think places are necessary either,' he returned. 'I will tell you what I did and that must serve you. I did not promise to give number and street.'

"'Well, well,' Joe exclaimed; 'earn your fifty, that is all. Show that you remember where you were on the night of'—and with an admirable show of indifference he pretended to consult the paper between them—'the seventeenth of July, 1851, and I shall be satisfied.'

"'I was at the club for one thing,' said Mr. T——; 'then I

went to see a lady friend, where I stayed till eleven. She wore a blue muslin—What is that?'

"I had betrayed myself by a quick movement which sent a glass tumbler to the floor. Helen Zabriskie had worn a blue muslin on that same night. I had noted it when I stood on the balcony watching her and her husband.

"'That noise?' It was Joe who was speaking. 'You don't know Reuben as well as I do or you wouldn't ask. It is his practise, I am sorry to say, to accentuate his pleasure in draining my bottles by dropping a glass at every third one.'

"Mr. T—— went on.

"'She was a married woman and I thought she loved me; but—and this is the greatest proof I can offer you that I am giving you a true account of that night—she had not had the slightest idea of the extent of my passion, and only consented to see me at all because she thought, poor thing, that a word from her would set me straight, and rid her of attentions that were fast becoming obnoxious. A sorry figure for a fellow to cut who has not been without his triumphs; but you caught me on the most detestable date in my calendar, and——'

"There is where he stopped being interesting, so I will not waste time by quoting further. And now what reply shall I make when Joe Smithers asks me double his usual price, as he will be sure to do, next time? Has he not earned an advance? I really think so.

"I have spent the whole day in weaving together the facts I have gleaned, and the suspicions I have formed, into a consecutive whole likely to present my theory in a favorable light to my superiors. But just as I thought myself in shape to meet their inquiries, I received an immediate summons into their presence, where I was given a duty to perform of so extraordinary and unexpected a nature, that it effectually drove from my mind all my own plans for the elucidation of the Zabriskie mystery.

"This was nothing more nor less than to take charge of a party of people who were going to the Jersey heights for the purpose of testing Dr. Zabriskie's skill with a pistol."

III

The cause of this sudden move was soon explained to me. Mrs. Zabriskie, anxious to have an end put to the present condi-

tion of affairs, had begged for a more rigid examination into her husband's state. This being accorded, a strict and impartial inquiry had taken place, with a result not unlike that which followed the first one. Three out of his four interrogators judged him insane, and could not be moved from their opinion, though opposed by the verdict of the young expert who had been living in the house with him. Dr. Zabriskie seemed to read their thoughts, and, showing extreme agitation, begged as before for an opportunity to prove his sanity by showing his skill in shooting. This time a disposition was evinced to grant his request, which Mrs. Zabriskie no sooner perceived, than she added her supplications to his that the question might be thus settled.

A pistol was accordingly brought; but at sight of it her courage failed, and she changed her plea to an entreaty that the experiment should be postponed till the next day, and should then take place in the woods away from the sight and hearing of needless spectators.

Though it would have been much wiser to have ended the matter there and then, the superintendent was prevailed upon to listen to her entreaties, and thus it was that I came to be a spectator, if not a participator, in the final scene of this most somber drama.

There are some events which impress the human mind so deeply that their memory mingles with all after-experiences. Though I have made it a rule to forget as soon as possible the tragic episodes into which I am constantly plunged, there is one scene in my life which will not depart at my will; and that is, the sight which met my eyes from the bow of the small boat in which Dr. Zabriskie and his wife were rowed over to Jersey on that memorable afternoon.

Though it was by no means late in the day, the sun was already sinking, and the bright red glare which filled the heavens and shone full upon the faces of the half-dozen persons before me added much to the tragic nature of the scene, though we were far from comprehending its full significance.

The doctor sat with his wife in the stern, and it was upon their faces my glance was fixed. The glare shone luridly on his sightless eyeballs, and as I noticed his unwinking lids I realized as never before what it was to be blind in the midst of sunshine. Her eyes, on the contrary, were lowered, but there was a look of hopeless misery in her colorless face which made her appearance infinitely pathetic, and I felt confident that if he

could only have seen her, he would not have maintained the cold and unresponsive manner which chilled the words on her lips and made all advance on her part impossible.

On the seat in front of them sat the inspector and a doctor, and from some quarter, possibly from under the inspector's coat, there came the monotonous ticking of a small clock, which, I had been told, was to serve as a target for the blind man's aim.

This ticking was all I heard, though the noise and bustle of a great traffic were pressing upon us on every side. And I am sure it was all she heard, as, with hand pressed to her heart and eyes fixed on the opposite shore, she waited for the event which was to determine whether the man she loved was a criminal or only a being afflicted of God, and worthy of her unceasing care and devotion.

As the sun cast its last scarlet gleam over the water, the boat grounded, and it fell to my lot to assist Mrs. Zabriskie up the bank. As I did so, I allowed myself to say: "I am your friend, Mrs. Zabriskie," and was astonished to see her tremble, and turn toward me with a look like that of a frightened child.

But there was always this characteristic blending in her countenance of the childlike and the severe, such as may so often be seen in the faces of nuns, and beyond an added pang of pity for this beautiful but afflicted woman, I let the moment pass without giving it the weight it perhaps demanded.

"The doctor and his wife had a long talk last night," was whispered in my ear as we wound our way along into the woods. I turned, and perceived at my side the expert physician, portions of whose diary I have already quoted. He had come by another boat.

"But it did not seem to heal whatever breach lies between them," he proceeded. Then in a quick, curious tone, he asked: "Do you believe this attempt on his part is likely to prove anything but a farce?"

"I believe he will shatter the clock to pieces with his first shot," I answered, and could say no more, for we had already reached the ground which had been selected for this trial at arms, and the various members of the party were being placed in their several positions.

The doctor, to whom light and darkness were alike, stood with his face towards the western glow, and at his side were

grouped the inspector and the two physicians. On the arm of one of the latter hung Dr. Zabriskie's overcoat, which he had taken off as soon as he had reached the field.

Mrs. Zabriskie stood at the other end of the opening, near a tall stump, upon which it had been decided that the clock should be placed when the moment came for the doctor to show his skill. She had been accorded the privilege of setting the clock on this stump, and I saw it shining in her hand as she paused for a moment to glance back at the circle of gentlemen who were awaiting her movements. The hands of the clock stood at five minutes to five, though I scarcely noted the fact at the time, for her eyes were on mine, and as she passed me she spoke:

"If he is not himself, he cannot be trusted. Watch him carefully, and see that he does no mischief to himself or others. Be at his right hand, and stop him if he does not handle his pistol properly."

I promised, and she passed on, setting the clock upon the stump and immediately drawing back to a suitable distance at the right, where she stood, wrapped in her long, dark cloak, quite alone. Her face shone ghastly white, even in its environment of snow-covered boughs which surrounded her, and, noting this, I wished the minutes fewer between the present moment and the hour of five, at which he was to draw the trigger.

"Dr. Zabriskie," quoth the inspector, "we have endeavored to make this trial a perfectly fair one. You are to have one shot at a small clock which has been placed within a suitable distance, and which you are expected to hit, guided only by the sound which it will make in striking the hour of five. Are you satisfied with the arrangement?"

"Perfectly. Where is my wife?"

"On the other side of the field, some ten paces from the stump upon which the clock is fixed."

He bowed, and his face showed satisfaction.

"May I expect the clock to strike soon?"

"In less than five minutes," was the answer.

"Then let me have the pistol; I wish to become acquainted with its size and weight."

We glanced at each other, then across at her.

She made a gesture; it was one of acquiescence.

Immediately the inspector placed the weapon in the blind man's hand. It was at once apparent that the doctor understood

the instrument, and my last doubt vanished as to the truth of all he had told us.

"Thank God I am blind this hour, and cannot see her," fell unconsciously from his lips; then, before the echo of these words had left my ears, he raised his voice and observed calmly enough, considering that he was about to prove himself a criminal in order to save himself from being thought a madman.

"Let no one move. I must have my ears free for catching the first stroke of the clock." And he raised the pistol before him.

There was a moment of torturing suspense and deep, unbroken silence. My eyes were on him, and so I did not watch the clock, but suddenly I was moved by some irresistible impulse to note how Mrs. Zabriskie was bearing herself at this critical moment, and, casting a hurried glance in her direction, I perceived her tall figure swaying from side to side, as if under an intolerable strain of feeling. Her eyes were on the clock, the hands of which seemed to creep with snail-like pace along the dial, when unexpectedly, and a full minute before the minute-hand had reached the stroke of five, I caught a movement on her part, saw the flash of something round and white show for an instant against the darkness of her cloak, and was about to shriek warning to the doctor, when the shrill, quick stroke of a clock rang out on the frosty air, followed by the ping and flash of a pistol.

A sound of shattered glass, followed by a suppressed cry, told us that the bullet had struck the mark, but before we could move, or rid our eyes of the smoke which the wind had blown into our faces, there came another sound which made our hair stand on end, and sent the blood back in terror to our hearts. Another clock was striking, the clock which we now perceived was still standing upright on the stump where Mrs. Zabriskie had placed it.

Whence came the clock, then, which had struck before the time, and had been shattered for its pains? One quick look told us. On the ground, ten paces at the right, lay Helen Zabriskie, a broken clock at her side, and in her breast a bullet which was fast sapping the life from her sweet eyes.

We had to tell him, there was such pleading in her looks; and never shall I forget the scream that rang from his lips as he realized the truth. Breaking from our midst, he rushed forward, and fell at her feet as if guided by some supernatural instinct.

"Helen!" he shrieked; "what is this? Were not my hands dyed deep enough in blood that you should make me answerable for your life also?"

Her eyes were closed, but she opened them. Looking long and steadily at his agonized face, she faltered forth:

"It is not you who have killed me; it is your crime. Had you been innocent of Mr. Hasbrouck's death, your bullet would never have found my heart. Did you think I could survive the proof that you had killed that good man?"

"I—I did it unwittingly. I——"

"Hush!" she commanded, with an awful look, which, happily, he could not see. "I had another motive. I wished to prove to you, even at the cost of my life, that I loved you, had always loved you, and not——"

It was now his turn to silence her. His hand crept over her lips, and his despairing face turned itself blindly towards us.

"Go!" he cried; "leave us! Let me take a last farewell of my dying wife, without listeners or spectators."

Consulting the eye of the physician who stood beside me, and seeing no hope in it, I fell slowly back. The others followed, and the doctor was left alone with his wife. From the distant position we took, we saw her arms creep round his neck, saw her head fall confidingly on his breast, then silence settled upon them and upon all nature, the gathering twilight deepening, till the last glow disappeared from the heavens above and from the circle of leafless trees which enclosed this tragedy from the outside world.

But at last there came a stir, and Dr. Zabriskie, rising before us, with the dead body of his wife held closely to his breast, confronted us with a countenance so rapturous that he looked like a man transfigured.

"I will carry her to the boat," said he. "Not another hand shall touch her. She was my true wife, my true wife!" And he towered into an attitude of such dignity and passion, that for a moment he took on heroic proportions and we forgot that he had just proved himself to have committed a cold-blooded and ghastly crime.

* * * * * * *

The stars were shining when we again took our seats in the boat; and if the scene of our crossing to Jersey was impressive, what shall be said of that of our return?

The doctor, as before, sat in the stern, an awesome figure, upon which the moon shone with a white radiance that seemed to lift his face out of the surrounding darkness and set it, like an image of frozen horror, before our eyes. Against his breast he held the form of his dead wife, and now and then I saw him stoop as if he were listening for some tokens of life at her set lips. Then he would lift himself again, with hopelessness stamped upon his features, only to lean forward in renewed hope that was again destined to disappointment.

The inspector and the accompanying physician had taken seats at the bow, and unto me had been assigned the special duty of watching over the doctor. This I did from a low seat in front of him. I was therefore so close that I heard his laboring breath, and though my heart was full of awe and compassion, I could not prevent myself from bending towards him and saying these words:

"Dr. Zabriskie, the mystery of your crime is no longer a mystery to me. Listen and see if I do not understand your temptation, and how you, a conscientious and God-fearing man, came to slay your innocent neighbor.

"A friend of yours, or so he called himself, had for a long time filled your ears with tales tending to make you suspicious of your wife and jealous of a certain man whom I will not name. You knew that your friend had a grudge against this man, and so for many months turned a deaf ear to his insinuations. But finally some change which you detected in your wife's bearing or conversation roused your own suspicions, and you began to doubt if all was false that came to your ears, and to curse your blindness, which in a measure rendered you helpless. The jealous fever grew and had risen to a high point, when one night—a memorable night—this friend met you just as you were leaving town, and with cruel craft whispered in your ear that the man you hated was even then with your wife, and that if you would return at once to your home you would find him in her company.

"The demon that lurks at the heart of all men, good or bad, thereupon took complete possession of you, and you answered this false friend by saying that you would not return without a pistol. Whereupon he offered to take you to his house and give you his. You consented, and getting rid of your servant by sending him to Poughkeepsie with your excuses, you entered a coach with your friend.

"You say you bought the pistol, and perhaps you did, but, however that may be, you left his house with it in your pocket and, declining companionship, walked home, arriving at the Colonade a little before midnight.

"Ordinarily you have no difficulty in recognizing your own doorstep. But, being in a heated frame of mind, you walked faster than usual and so passed your own house and stopped at that of Mr. Hasbrouck's, one door beyond. As the entrances of these houses are all alike, there was but one way in which you could have made yourself sure that you had reached your own dwelling, and that was by feeling for the doctor's sign at the side of the door. But you never thought of that. Absorbed in dreams of vengeance, your sole impulse was to enter by the quickest means possible. Taking out your night-key, you thrust it into the lock. It fitted, but it took strength to turn it, so much strength that the key was bent and twisted by the effort. But this incident, which would have attracted your attention at another time, was lost upon you at this moment. An entrance had been effected, and you were in too excited a frame of mind to notice at what cost, or to detect the small differences apparent in the atmosphere and furnishings of the two houses—trifles which would have arrested your attention under other circumstances, and made you pause before the upper floor had been reached.

"It was while going up the stairs that you took out your pistol, so that by the time you arrived at the front-room door you held it ready cocked and drawn in your hand. For, being blind, you feared escape on the part of your victim, and so waited for nothing but the sound of a man's voice before firing. When, therefore, the unfortunate Mr. Hasbrouck, roused by this sudden intrusion, advanced with an exclamation of astonishment, you pulled the trigger, killing him on the spot. It must have been immediately upon his fall that you recognized some word he uttered, or from some contact you may have had with your surroundings, that you were in the wrong house and had killed the wrong man; for you cried out, in evident remorse, 'God! what have I done!' and fled without approaching your victim.

"Descending the stairs, you rushed from the house, closing the front door behind you and regaining your own without being seen. But here you found yourself baffled in your attempted escape by two things. First, by the pistol you still held in your hand, and secondly, by the fact that the key upon which you depended for entering your own door was so twisted out of

shape that you knew it would be useless for you to attempt to use it. What did you do in this emergency? You have already told us, though the story seemed so improbable at the time, you found nobody to believe it but myself. The pistol you flung far away from you down the pavement, from which, by one of those rare chances which sometimes happen in this world, it was presently picked up by some late passer-by of more or less doubtful character. The door offered less of an obstacle than you anticipated; for when you turned to it again you found it, if I am not greatly mistaken, ajar, left so, as we have reason to believe, by one who had gone out of it but a few minutes before in a state which left him but little master of his actions. It was this fact which provided you with an answer when you were asked how you succeeded in getting into Mr. Hasbrouck's house after the family had retired for the night.

"Astonished at the coincidence, but hailing with gladness the deliverance which it offered, you went in and ascended at once into your wife's presence; and it was from her lips, and not from those of Mrs. Hasbrouck, that the cry arose which startled the neighborhood and prepared men's minds for the tragic words which were shouted a moment later from the next house.

"But she who uttered the scream knew of no tragedy save that which was taking place in her own breast. She had just repulsed a dastardly suitor, and, seeing you enter so unexpectedly in a state of unaccountable horror and agitation, was naturally stricken with dismay, and thought she saw your ghost, or, what was worse, a possible avenger; while you, having failed to kill the man you sought, and having killed a man you esteemed, let no surprise on her part lure you into any dangerous self-betrayal. You strove instead to soothe her, and even attempted to explain the excitement under which you labored, by an account of your narrow escape at the station, till the sudden alarm from next door distracted her attention, and sent both your thoughts and hers in a different direction. Not till conscience had fully awakened and the horror of your act had had time to tell upon your sensitive nature, did you breathe forth those vague confessions, which, not being supported by the only explanations which would have made them credible, led her, as well as the police, to consider you affected in your mind. Your pride as a man, and your consideration for her as a woman, kept you silent, but did not keep the worm from preying upon your heart.

"Am I not correct in my surmises, Dr. Zabriskie, and is not this the true explanation of your crime?"

With a strange look, he lifted up his face.

"Hush!" said he; "you will awaken her. See how peacefully she sleeps! I should not like to have her awakened now, she is so tired, and I—I have not watched over her as I should."

Appalled at his gesture, his look, his tone, I drew back, and for a few minutes no sound was to be heard but the steady dip-dip of the oars and the lap-lap of the waters against the boat. Then there came a quick uprising, the swaying before me of something dark and tall and threatening, and before I could speak or move, or even stretch forth my hands to stay him, the seat before me was empty and darkness had filled the place where but an instant previous he had sat, a fearsome figure, erect and rigid as a sphinx.

What little moonlight there was only served to show us a few rising bubbles, marking the spot where the unfortunate man had sunk with his much-loved burden. We could not save him. As the widening circles fled farther and farther out, the tide drifted us away, and we lost the spot which had seen the termination of one of earth's saddest tragedies.

The bodies were never recovered. The police reserved to themselves the right of withholding from the public the real facts which made this catastrophe an awful remembrance to those who witnessed it. A verdict of accidental death by drowning answered all purposes, and saved the memory of the unfortunate pair from such calumny as might have otherwise assailed it. It was the least we could do for two beings whom circumstances had so greatly afflicted.

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *grandson of the Irish caricaturist John Doyle, was born at Edinburgh on May 22, 1859. He attended Stonyhurst College, and later studied medicine at Edinburgh University. He was a practising physician from 1882 to 1890. During the Boer War he was registrar of the Langman Field Hospital in South Africa, and in recognition of his services to the government, was knighted in 1902. He essayed fiction at an early age, but had little success until the publication of "A Study in Scarlet" in 1887—the book in which Sherlock Holmes made his début. "The Sign of Four" appeared in 1889, "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" in 1891, "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes" in 1893, "The Hound of the Baskervilles" in 1902, "The Return of Sherlock Holmes" in 1904, "His Last Bow" in 1917, and "The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes" in 1927.*

Besides these records of his famous detective Doyle wrote "The White Company" (1890), "The Great Shadow" (1892), "Rodney Stone" (1896), "The Lost World" (1912), and other novels of adventure and historical romance; numerous volumes of short stories; a number of works of war history; and several books on spiritualism—a subject to which he has devoted much of his time during recent years. Despite his earnest efforts to make a reputation in literary fields other than that of the detective story, he is best known for his Sherlock Holmes series, which have been translated into nearly every modern language, and have had a wide influence on the development of this fictional genre.

"The Boscombe Valley Mystery" is taken from "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes."

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY

By A. Conan Doyle

We were seated at breakfast one morning, my wife and I, when the maid brought in a telegram. It was from Sherlock Holmes, and ran in this way:

"Have you a couple of days to spare? Have just been wired for from the West of England in connection with Boscombe Valley tragedy. Shall be glad if you will come with me. Air and scenery perfect. Leave Paddington by the 11:15."

"What do you say, dear?" said my wife, looking across at me. "Will you go?"

"I really don't know what to say. I have a fairly long list at present."

"Oh, Anstruther would do your work for you. You have been looking a little pale lately. I think that the change would do you good, and you are always so interested in Mr. Sherlock Holmes's cases."

"I should be ungrateful if I were not, seeing what I gained through one of them," I answered. "But if I am to go I must pack at once, for I have only half an hour."

My experience of camp life in Afghanistan had at least had the effect of making me a prompt and ready traveler. My wants were few and simple, so that in less than the time stated I was in a cab with my valise, rattling away to Paddington Station. Sherlock Holmes was pacing up and down the platform, his tall, gaunt figure made even gaunter and taller by his long gray traveling cloak and close-fitting cloth cap.

"It is really very good of you to come, Watson," said he. "It makes a considerable difference to me, having someone with me on whom I can thoroughly rely. Local aid is always either worthless or else biased. If you will keep the two corner seats I shall get the tickets."

We had the carriage to ourselves save for an immense litter of papers which Holmes had brought with him. Among these

he rummaged and read, with intervals of note-taking and of meditation, until we were past Reading. Then he suddenly rolled them all into a gigantic ball, and tossed them up on to the rack.

"Have you heard anything of the case?" he asked.

"Not a word. I have not seen a paper for some days."

"The London press has not had very full accounts. I have just been looking through all the recent papers in order to master the particulars. It seems, from what I gather, to be one of those simple cases which are so extremely difficult."

"That sounds a little paradoxical."

"But it is profoundly true. Singularity is almost invariably a clue. The more featureless and commonplace a crime is, the more difficult is it to bring it home. In this case, however, they have established a very serious case against the son of the murdered man."

"It is a murder, then?"

"Well, it is conjectured to be so. I shall take nothing for granted until I have the opportunity of looking personally into it. I will explain the state of things to you, as far as I have been able to understand it, in a very few words.

"Boscombe Valley is a country district not very far from Ross, in Herefordshire. The largest landed proprietor in that part is a Mr. John Turner, who made his money in Australia, and returned some years ago to the old country. One of the farms which he held, that of Hatherley, was let to Mr. Charles McCarthy, who was also an ex-Australian. The men had known each other in the Colonies, so that it was not unnatural that when they came to settle down they should do so as near each other as possible. Turner was apparently the richer man, so McCarthy became his tenant, but still remained, it seems, upon terms of perfect equality, as they were frequently together. McCarthy had one son, a lad of eighteen, and Turner had an only daughter of the same age, but neither of them had wives living. They appear to have avoided the neighboring English families, and to have led retired lives, though both the McCarthys were fond of sport, and were frequently seen at the race meetings of the neighborhood. McCarthy kept two servants—a man and a girl. Turner had a considerable household, some half-dozen at the least. That is as much as I have been able to gather about the families. Now for the facts.

"On June 3d, that is, on Monday last, McCarthy left his

house at Hatherley about three in the afternoon, and walked down to the Boscombe Pool, which is a small lake formed by the spreading out of the stream which runs down the Boscombe Valley. He had been out with his serving-man in the morning at Ross, and he had told the man that he must hurry, as he had an appointment of importance to keep at three. From that appointment he never came back alive.

"From Hatherley Farmhouse to the Boscombe Pool is a quarter of a mile, and two people saw him as he passed over this ground. One was an old woman, whose name is not mentioned, and the other was William Crowder, a gamekeeper in the employ of Mr. Turner. Both these witnesses depose that Mr. McCarthy was walking alone. The gamekeeper adds that within a few minutes of his seeing Mr. McCarthy pass he had seen his son, Mr. James McCarthy, going the same way with a gun under his arm. To the best of his belief, the father was actually in sight at the time, and the son was following him. He thought no more of the matter until he heard in the evening of the tragedy that had occurred.

"The two McCarthys were seen after the time when William Crowder, the gamekeeper, lost sight of them. The Boscombe Pool is thickly wooded round, with just a fringe of grass and of reeds round the edge. A girl of fourteen, Patience Moran, who is the daughter of the lodge-keeper of the Boscombe Valley estate, was in one of the woods picking flowers. She states that while she was there she saw, at the border of the wood and close by the lake, Mr. McCarthy and his son, and that they appeared to be having a violent quarrel. She heard Mr. McCarthy the elder using very strong language to his son, and she saw the latter raise up his hand as if to strike his father. She was so frightened by their violence that she ran away, and told her mother when she reached home that she had left the two McCarthys quarreling near Boscombe Pool, and that she was afraid that they were going to fight. She had hardly said the words when young Mr. McCarthy came running up to the lodge to say that he had found his father dead in the wood, and to ask for the help of the lodge-keeper. He was much excited, without either his gun or his hat, and his right hand and sleeve were observed to be stained with fresh blood. On following him they found the dead body stretched out upon the grass beside the Pool. The head had been beaten in by repeated blows of some heavy and blunt weapon. The injuries were such as might very well

have been inflicted by the butt-end of his son's gun, which was found lying on the grass within a few paces of the body. Under these circumstances the young man was instantly arrested, and a verdict of 'Wilful Murder' having been returned at the inquest on Tuesday, he was on Wednesday brought before the magistrates at Ross, who have referred the case to the next assizes. Those are the main facts of the case as they came out before the coroner and at the police court."

"I could hardly imagine a more damning case," I remarked. "If ever circumstantial evidence pointed to a criminal, it does so here."

"Circumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing," answered Holmes, thoughtfully. "It may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different. It must be confessed, however, that the case looks exceedingly grave against the young man, and it is very possible that he is indeed the culprit. There are several people in the neighborhood, however, and among them Miss Turner, the daughter of the neighboring land-owner, who believe in his innocence, and who have retained Lestrade, whom you may recollect in connection with the Study in Scarlet, to work out the case in his interest. Lestrade, being rather puzzled, has referred the case to me, and hence it is that two middle-aged gentlemen are flying westward at fifty miles an hour, instead of quietly digesting their breakfasts at home."

"I am afraid," said I, "that the facts are so obvious that you will find little credit to be gained out of this case."

"There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact," he answered, laughing. "Besides, we may chance to hit upon some other obvious facts which may have been by no means obvious to Mr. Lestrade. You know me too well to think that I am boasting when I say that I shall either confirm or destroy his theory by means which he is quite incapable of employing, or even of understanding. To take the first example to hand, I very clearly perceive that in your bedroom the window is upon the right-hand side, and yet I question whether Mr. Lestrade would have noted even so self-evident a thing as that."

"How on earth——!"

"My dear fellow, I know you well. I know the military neatness which characterizes you. You shave every morning, and in this season you shave by the sunlight, but since your shaving is

less and less complete as we get further back on the left side, until it becomes positively slovenly as we get round the angle of the jaw, it is surely very clear that that side is less well illuminated than the other. I could not imagine a man of your habits looking at himself in an equal light, and being satisfied with such a result. I only quote this as a trivial example of observation and inference. Therein lies my *métier*, and it is just possible that it may be of some service in the investigation, which lies before us. There are one or two minor points which were brought out in the inquest, and which are worth considering."

"What are they?"

"It appears that his arrest did not take place at once, but after the return to Hatherley Farm. On the inspector of constabulary informing him that he was a prisoner, he remarked that he was not surprised to hear it, and that it was no more than his deserts. This observation of his had the natural effect of removing any traces of doubt which might have remained in the minds of the coroner's jury."

"It was a confession," I ejaculated.

"No, for it was followed by a protestation of innocence."

"Coming on the top of such a damning series of events, it was at least a most suspicious remark."

"On the contrary," said Holmes, "it is the brightest rift which I can at present see in the clouds. However innocent he might be, he could not be such an absolute imbecile as not to see that the circumstances were very black against him. Had he appeared surprised at his own arrest, or feigned indignation at it, I should have looked upon it as highly suspicious, because such surprise or anger would not be natural under the circumstances, and yet might appear to be the best policy to a scheming man. His frank acceptance of the situation marks him as either an innocent man, or else as a man of considerable self-restraint and firmness. As to his remark about his deserts, it was also not unnatural if you consider that he stood beside the dead body of his father, and that there is no doubt that he had that very day so far forgotten his filial duty as to bandy words with him, and even, according to the little girl whose evidence is so important, to raise his hand as if to strike him. The self-reproach and contrition which are displayed in his remark appear to me to be the signs of a healthy mind, rather than of a guilty one."

I shook my head. "Many men have been hanged on far slighter evidence," I remarked.

"So they have. And many men have been wrongfully hanged."

"What is the young man's own account of the matter?"

"It is, I am afraid, not very encouraging to his supporters, though there are one or two points in it which are suggestive. You will find it here, and may read it for yourself."

He picked out from his bundle a copy of the local Herefordshire paper, and having turned down the sheet, he pointed out the paragraph in which the unfortunate young man had given his own statement of what had occurred. I settled myself down in the corner of the carriage, and read it very carefully. It ran in this way:

"Mr. James McCarthy, the only son of the deceased, was then called, and gave evidence as follows: I had been away from home for three days at Bristol, and had only just returned upon the morning of last Monday, the 3d. My father was absent from home at the time of my arrival, and I was informed by the maid that he had driven over to Ross with John Cobb, the groom. Shortly after my return I heard the wheels of his trap in the yard, and, looking out of my window, I saw him get out and walk rapidly out of the yard, though I was not aware in which direction he was going. I then took my gun, and strolled out in the direction of the Boscombe Pool, with the intention of visiting the rabbit warren which is upon the other side. On my way I saw William Crowder, the gamekeeper, as he has stated in his evidence; but he is mistaken in thinking that I was following my father. I had no idea that he was in front of me. When about a hundred yards from the Pool I heard a cry of 'Cooee!' which was a usual signal between my father and myself. I then hurried forward, and found him standing by the Pool. He appeared to be much surprised at seeing me, and asked me rather roughly what I was doing there. A conversation ensued, which led to high words, and almost to blows, for my father was a man of a very violent temper. Seeing that his passion was becoming ungovernable, I left him, and returned towards Hatherley Farm. I had not gone more than one hundred and fifty yards, however, when I heard a hideous outcry behind me, which caused me to run back again. I found my father expiring upon the ground, with his head terribly injured. I dropped my gun, and held him in my arms, but he almost

instantly expired. I knelt beside him for some minutes, and then made my way to Mr. Turner's lodge-keeper, his house being the nearest, to ask for assistance. I saw no one near my father when I returned, and I have no idea how he came by his injuries. He was not a popular man, being somewhat cold and forbidding in his manners; but he had, as far as I know, no active enemies. I know nothing further of the matter.

"The Coroner: Did your father make any statement to you before he died?

"Witness: He mumbled a few words, but I could only catch some allusion to a rat.

"The Coroner: What did you understand by that?

"Witness: It conveyed no meaning to me. I thought that he was delirious.

"The Coroner: What was the point upon which you and your father had this final quarrel?

"Witness: I should prefer not to answer.

"The Coroner: I am afraid I must press it.

"Witness: It is really impossible for me to tell you. I can assure you that it has nothing to do with the sad tragedy which followed.

"The Coroner: That is for the Court to decide. I need not point out to you that your refusal to answer will prejudice your case considerably in any future proceedings which may arise.

"Witness: I must still refuse.

"The Coroner: I understand that the cry of 'Cooee' was a common signal between you and your father?

"Witness: It was.

"The Coroner: How was it, then, that he uttered it before he saw you, and before he even knew that you had returned from Bristol?

"Witness (with considerable confusion): I do not know.

"A Juryman: Did you see nothing that aroused your suspicion when you returned on hearing the cry, and found your father fatally injured?

"Witness: Nothing definite.

"The Coroner: What do you mean?

"Witness: I was so disturbed and excited as I rushed out into the open, that I could think of nothing except of my father. Yet I have a vague impression that as I ran forward something lay upon the ground, to the left of me. It seemed to me to be something gray in color, a coat of some sort, or a plaid perhaps.

When I rose from my father I looked round for it, but it was gone.

"'Do you mean that it disappeared before you went for help?'

"'Yes, it was gone.'

"'You cannot say what it was?'

"'No; I had a feeling something was there.'

"'How far from the body?'

"'A dozen yards or so.'

"'And how far from the edge of the wood?'

"'About the same.'

"'Then if it was removed it was while you were within a dozen yards of it?'

"'Yes, but with my back towards it.'

"This concluded the examination of the witness."

"I see," said I, as I glanced down the column, "that the coroner in his concluding remarks was rather severe upon young McCarthy. He calls attention, and with reason, to the discrepancy about his father having signaled to him before seeing him, also to his refusal to give details of his conversation with his father, and his singular account of his father's dying words. They are all, as he remarks, very much against the son."

Holmes laughed softly to himself, and stretched himself out upon the cushioned seat. "Both you and the coroner have been at some pains," said he, "to single out the very strongest points in the young man's favor. Don't you see that you alternately give him credit for having too much imagination and too little? Too little, if he could not invent a cause of quarrel which would give him the sympathy of the jury; too much, if he evolved from his own inner consciousness anything so *outré* as a dying reference to a rat, and the incident of the vanishing cloth. No, sir, I shall approach this case from the point of view that what this young man says is true, and we shall see whither this hypothesis will lead us. And now here is my own pocket Petrarch, and not another word shall I say of this case until we are on the scene of action. We lunch at Swindon, and I see that we shall be there in twenty minutes."

It was nearly four o'clock when we at last, after passing through the beautiful Stroud Valley, and over the broad gleaming Severn, found ourselves at the pretty little country town of Ross. A lean, ferret-like man, furtive and shy-looking, was waiting for us upon the platform. In spite of the light brown

dust-coat and leather leggings which he wore in deference to his rustic surroundings, I had no difficulty in recognizing Lestrade, of Scotland Yard. With him we drove to the Hereford Arms, where a room had already been engaged for us.

"I have ordered a carriage," said Lestrade, as we sat over a cup of tea. "I knew your energetic nature, and that you would not be happy until you had been on the scene of the crime."

"It was very nice and complimentary of you," Holmes answered. "It is entirely a question of barometric pressure."

Lestrade looked startled. "I do not quite follow," he said.

"How is the glass? Twenty-nine, I see. No wind, and not a cloud in the sky. I have a case full of cigarettes here which need smoking, and the sofa is very much superior to the usual country hotel abomination. I do not think that it is probable that I shall use the carriage to-night."

Lestrade laughed indulgently. "You have, no doubt, already formed your conclusions from the newspapers," he said. "The case is as plain as a pikestaff, and the more one goes into it the plainer it becomes. Still, of course, one can't refuse a lady, and such a very positive one, too. She had heard of you, and would have your opinion, though I repeatedly told her that there was nothing which you could do which I had not already done. Why, bless my soul! here is her carriage at the door."

He had hardly spoken before there rushed into the room one of the most lovely young women that I have ever seen in my life. Her violet eyes shining, her lips parted, a pink flush upon her cheeks, all thought of her natural reserve lost in her overpowering excitement and concern.

"Oh, Mr. Sherlock Holmes!" she cried, glancing from one to the other of us, and finally, with a woman's quick intuition, fastening upon my companion, "I'm so glad that you have come. I have driven down to tell you so. I know that James didn't do it. I know it, and I want you to start upon your work knowing it, too. Never let yourself doubt upon that point. We have known each other since we were little children, and I know his faults as no one else does; but he is too tender-hearted to hurt a fly. Such a charge is absurd to anyone who really knows him."

"I hope we can clear him, Miss Turner," said Sherlock Holmes. "You may rely upon my doing all that I can."

"But you have read the evidence. You have formed some

conclusion? Do you not see some loop-hole, some flaw? Do you not yourself think that he is innocent?"

"I think that it is very probable."

"There now!" she cried, throwing back her head, and looking defiantly at Lestrade. "You hear! He gives me hopes."

Lestrade shrugged his shoulders. "I am afraid that my colleague has been a little quick in forming his conclusions," he said.

"But he is right. Oh! I know that he is right. James never did it. And about his quarrel with his father, I am sure that the reason why he would not speak about it to the coroner was because I was concerned in it."

"In what way?" asked Holmes.

"It is no time for me to hide anything. James and his father had many disagreements about me. Mr. McCarthy was very anxious that there should be a marriage between us. James and I have always loved each other as brother and sister, but of course he is young, and has seen very little of life yet, and—and—well, he naturally did not wish to do anything like that yet. So there were quarrels, and this, I am sure, was one of them."

"And your father?" asked Holmes. "Was he in favor of such a union?"

"No, he was averse to it also. No one but Mr. McCarthy was in favor of it." A quick blush passed over her fresh young face as Holmes shot one of his keen, questioning glances at her.

"Thank you for this information," said he. "May I see your father if I call to-morrow?"

"I am afraid the doctor won't allow it."

"The doctor?"

"Yes. Have you not heard? Poor father has never been strong for years back, but this has broken him down completely. He has taken to his bed, and Dr. Willows says that he is a wreck, and that his nervous system is shattered. Mr. McCarthy was the only man alive who had known dad in the old days in Victoria."

"Ha! In Victoria! That is important."

"Yes, at the mines."

"Quite so; at the gold mines, where, as I understand, Mr. Turner made his money."

"Yes, certainly."

"Thank you, Miss Turner. You have been of material assistance to me."

"You will tell me if you have any news to-morrow. No doubt you will go to the prison to see James. Oh, if you do, Mr. Holmes, do tell him that I know him to be innocent."

"I will, Miss Turner."

"I must go home now, for dad is very ill, and he misses me so if I leave him. Good-by, and God help you in your undertaking." She hurried from the room as impulsively as she had entered, and we heard the wheels of her carriage rattle off down the street.

"I am ashamed of you, Holmes," said Lestrade, with dignity, after a few minutes' silence. "Why should you raise up hopes which you are bound to disappoint? I am not over tender of heart, but I call it cruel."

"I think that I see my way to clearing James McCarthy," said Holmes. "Have you an order to see him in prison?"

"Yes, but only for you and me."

"Then I shall reconsider my resolution about going out. We have still time to take a train to Hereford and see him to-night?"

"Ample."

"Then let us do so. Watson, I fear that you will find it very slow, but I shall only be away a couple of hours."

I walked down to the station with them, and then wandered through the streets of the little town, finally returning to the hotel, where I lay upon the sofa and tried to interest myself in a yellow-backed novel. The puny plot of the story was so thin, however, when compared to the deep mystery through which we were groping, and I found my attention wandering so continually from the fiction to the fact, that I at last flung it across the room and gave myself up entirely to a consideration of the events of the day. Supposing that this unhappy young man's story was absolutely true, then what hellish thing, what absolutely unforeseen and extraordinary calamity could have occurred between the time when he parted from his father and the moment when, drawn back by his screams, he rushed into the glade? It was something terrible and deadly. What could it be? Might not the nature of the injuries reveal something to my medical instincts? I rang the bell and called for the weekly county paper which contained a verbatim account of the inquest. In the surgeon's deposition it was stated that the posterior third of the left parietal bone and the left half of the occipital bone had been shattered by a heavy blow from a blunt weapon. I

marked the spot upon my own head. Clearly such a blow must have been struck from behind. That was to some extent in favor of the accused, as when seen quarreling he was face to face with his father. Still, it did not go for very much, for the older man might have turned his back before the blow fell. Still, it might be worth while to call Holmes's attention to it. Then there was the peculiar dying reference to a rat. What could that mean? It could not be delirium. A man dying from a sudden blow does not commonly become delirious. No, it was more likely to be an attempt to explain how he met his fate. But what could it indicate? I cudgeled my brains to find some possible explanation. And then the incident of the gray cloth seen by young McCarthy. If that were true, the murderer must have dropped some part of his dress, presumably his overcoat, in his flight, and must have had the hardihood to return and to carry it away at the instant when the son was kneeling with his back turned not a dozen paces off. What a tissue of mysteries and improbabilities the whole thing was! I did not wonder at Lestrade's opinion, and yet I had so much faith in Sherlock Holmes's insight that I could not lose hope as long as every fresh fact seemed to strengthen his conviction of young McCarthy's innocence.

It was late before Sherlock Holmes returned. He came back alone, for Lestrade was staying in lodgings in the town.

"The glass still keeps very high," he remarked, as he sat down. "It is of importance that it should not rain before we are able to go over the ground. On the other hand, a man should be at his very best and keenest for such nice work as that, and I did not wish to do it when fagged by a long journey. I have seen young McCarthy."

"And what did you learn from him?"

"Nothing."

"Could he throw no light?"

"None at all. I was inclined to think at one time that he knew who had done it, and was screening him or her, but I am convinced now that he is as puzzled as everyone else. He is not a very quick-witted youth, though comely to look at, and, I should think, sound at heart."

"I cannot admire his taste," I remarked, "if it is indeed a fact that he was averse to a marriage with so charming a young lady as this Miss Turner."

"Ah, thereby hangs a rather painful tale. This fellow is

madly, insanely in love with her, but some two years ago, when he was only a lad, and before he really knew her, for she had been away five years at a boarding school, what does the idiot do but get into the clutches of a barmaid in Bristol and marry her at a registry office? No one knows a word of the matter, but you can imagine how maddening it must be to him to be upbraided for not doing what he would give his very eyes to do, but what he knows to be absolutely impossible. It was sheer frenzy of this sort which made him throw his hands up into the air when his father, at their last interview, was goading him on to propose to Miss Turner. On the other hand, he had no means of supporting himself, and his father, who was by all accounts a very hard man, would have thrown him over utterly had he known the truth. It was with his barmaid wife that he had spent the last three days in Bristol, and his father did not know where he was. Mark that point. It is of importance. Good has come out of evil, however, for the barmaid, finding from the papers that he is in serious trouble, and likely to be hanged, has thrown him over utterly, and has written to him to say that she has a husband already in the Bermuda Dockyard, so that there is really no tie between them. I think that that bit of news has consoled young McCarthy for all that he has suffered."

"But if he is innocent, who has done it?"

"Ah! who? I would call your attention very particularly to two points. One is that the murdered man had an appointment with someone at the Pool, and that the someone could not have been his son, for his son was away, and he did not know when he would return. The second is that the murdered man was heard to cry 'Cooee!' before he knew that his son had returned. Those are the crucial points upon which the case depends. And now let us talk about George Meredith, if you please, and we shall leave all minor matters until to-morrow."

There was no rain, as Holmes had foretold, and the morning broke bright and cloudless. At nine o'clock Lestrade called for us with the carriage, and we set off for Hatherley Farm and the Boscombe Pool.

"There is serious news this morning," Lestrade observed. "It is said that Mr. Turner, of the Hall, is so ill that his life is despaired of."

"An elderly man, I presume?" said Holmes.

"About sixty; but his constitution has been shattered by his

life abroad, and he has been in failing health for some time. This business has had a very bad effect upon him. He was an old friend of McCarthy's, and, I may add, a great benefactor to him, for I have learned that he gave him Hatherley Farm rent-free."

"Indeed, that is interesting," said Holmes.

"Oh, yes! In a hundred other ways he has helped him. Everybody about here speaks of his kindness to him."

"Really! Does it not strike you as a little singular that this McCarthy, who appears to have had little of his own, and to have been under such obligations to Turner, should still talk of marrying his son to Turner's daughter, who is, presumably heiress to the estate, and that in such a very cocksure manner, as if it were merely a case of a proposal and all else would follow? It is the more strange, since we know that Turner himself was averse to the idea. The daughter told us as much. Do you not deduce something from that?"

"We have got to the deductions and the inferences," said Lestrade, winking at me. "I find it hard enough to tackle facts, Holmes, without flying away after theories and fancies."

"You are right," said Holmes, demurely; "you do find it very hard to tackle the facts."

"Anyhow, I have grasped one fact which you seem to find it difficult to get hold of," replied Lestrade, with some warmth.

"And that is?"

"That McCarthy, senior, met his death from McCarthy, junior, and that all theories to the contrary are the merest moonshine."

"Well, moonshine is a brighter thing than fog," said Holmes, laughing. "But I am very much mistaken if this is not Hatherley Farm upon the left."

"Yes, that is it." It was a widespread, comfortable-looking building, two-storied, slate-roofed, with great yellow blotches of lichen upon the gray walls. The drawn blinds and the smokeless chimneys, however, gave it a stricken look, as though the weight of this horror still lay heavy upon it. We called at the door, when the maid, at Holmes's request, showed us the boots which her master wore at the time of his death, and also a pair of the son's, though not the pair which he had then had. Having measured these very carefully from seven or eight different points, Holmes desired to be led to the courtyard, from which we all followed the winding track which led to Boscombe Pool.

Sherlock Holmes was transformed when he was hot upon

such a scent as this. Men who had only known the quiet thinker and logician of Baker Street would have failed to recognize him. His face flushed and darkened. His brows were drawn into two hard, black lines, while his eyes shone out from beneath them with a steely glitter. His face was bent downward, his shoulders bowed, his lips compressed, and the veins stood out like whipcord in his long, sinewy neck. His nostrils seemed to dilate with a purely animal lust for the chase, and his mind was so absolutely concentrated upon the matter before him, that a question or remark fell unheeded upon his ears, or at the most only provoked a quick, impatient snarl in reply. Swiftly and silently he made his way along the track which ran through the meadows, and so by way of the woods to the Boscombe Pool. It was damp, marshy ground, as is all that district, and there were marks of many feet, both upon the path and amid the short grass which bounded it on either side. Sometimes Holmes would hurry on, sometimes stop dead, and once he made quite a little *détour* into the meadow. Lestrade and I walked behind him, the detective indifferent and contemptuous, while I watched my friend with the interest which sprang from the conviction that every one of his actions was directed towards a definite end.

The Boscombe Pool, which is a little reed-girt sheet of water some fifty yards across, is situated at the boundary between the Hatherley Farm and the private park of the wealthy Mr. Turner. Above the woods which lined it upon the further side we could see the red jutting pinnacles which marked the site of the rich land-owner's dwelling. On the Hatherley side of the pool the woods grew very thick, and there was a narrow belt of sodden grass twenty paces across between the edge of the trees and the reeds which lined the lake. Lestrade showed us the exact spot at which the body had been found, and, indeed, so moist was the ground, that I could plainly see the traces which had been left by the fall of the stricken man. To Holmes, as I could see by his eager face and peering eyes, very many other things were to be read upon the trampled grass. He ran round, like a dog who is picking up a scent, and then turned upon my companion.

"What did you go into the pool for?" he asked.

"I fished about with a rake. I thought there might be some weapon or other trace. But how on earth——"

"Oh, tut, tut! I have no time! That left foot of yours with

its inward twist is all over the place. A mole could trace it, and there it vanishes among the reeds. Oh, how simple it would all have been had I been here before they came like a herd of buffalo and wallowed all over it. Here is where the party with the lodge-keeper came, and they have covered all tracks for six or eight feet round the body. But there are three separate tracks of the same feet." He drew out a lens, and lay down upon his waterproof to have a better view, talking all the time rather to himself than to us. "These are young McCarthy's feet. Twice he was walking, and once he ran swiftly so that the soles are deeply marked, and the heels hardly visible. That bears out his story. He ran when he saw his father on the ground. Then here are the father's feet as he paced up and down. What is this, then? It is the butt-end of the gun as the son stood listening. And this? Ha, ha! What have we here? Tip-toes! tip-toes! Square too, quite unusual boots! They come, they go, they come again—of course that was for the cloak. Now where did they come from?" He ran up and down, sometimes losing, sometimes finding the track until we were well within the edge of the wood, and under the shadow of a great beech, the largest tree in the neighborhood. Holmes traced his way to the further side of this, and lay down once more upon his face with a little cry of satisfaction. For a long time he remained there, turning over the leaves and dried sticks, gathering up what seemed to me to be dust into an envelope, and examining with his lens not only the ground, but even the bark of the tree as far as he could reach. A jagged stone was lying among the moss, and this also he carefully examined and retained. Then he followed a pathway through the wood until he came to the highroad, where all traces were lost.

"It has been a case of considerable interest," he remarked, returning to his natural manner. "I fancy that this gray house on the right must be the lodge. I think that I will go in and have a word with Moran, and perhaps write a little note. Having done that, we may drive back to our luncheon. You may walk to the cab, and I shall be with you presently."

It was about ten minutes before we regained our cab, and drove back into Ross, Holmes still carrying with him the stone which he had picked up in the wood.

"This may interest you, Lestrade," he remarked, holding it out. "The murder was done with it."

"I see no marks."

"There are none, then?"

"How do you know, then?"

"The grass was growing under it. It had only lain there a few days. There was no sign of a place whence it had been taken. It corresponds with the injuries. There is no sign of any other weapon."

"And the murderer?"

"Is a tall man, left-handed, limps with the right leg, wears thick-soled shooting boots and a gray cloak, smokes Indian cigars, uses a cigar-holder, and carries a blunt penknife in his pocket. There are several other indications, but these may be enough to aid us in our search."

Lestrade laughed. "I am afraid that I am still a skeptic," he said. "Theories are all very well, but we have to deal with a hard-headed British jury."

"*Nous verrons,*" answered Holmes, calmly. "You work your own method, and I shall work mine. I shall be busy this afternoon, and shall probably return to London by the evening train."

"And leave your case unfinished?"

"No, finished."

"But the mystery?"

"It is solved."

"Who was the criminal, then?"

"The gentleman I describe."

"But who is he?"

"Surely it would not be difficult to find out. This is not such a populous neighborhood."

Lestrade shrugged his shoulders. "I am a practical man," he said, "and I really cannot undertake to go about the country looking for a left-handed gentleman with a game leg. I should become the laughing-stock of Scotland Yard."

"All right," said Holmes, quietly. "I have given you the chance. Here are your lodgings. Good-by. I shall drop you a line before I leave."

Having left Lestrade at his rooms we drove to our hotel, where we found lunch upon the table. Holmes was silent and buried in thought, with a pained expression upon his face, as one who finds himself in a perplexing position.

"Look here, Watson," he said, when the cloth was cleared; "just sit down in this chair and let me preach to you for a little. I don't quite know what to do, and I should value your advice. Light a cigar, and let me expound."

"Pray do so."

"Well, now in considering this case there are two points about young McCarthy's narrative which struck us both instantly, although they impressed me in his favor and you against him. One was the fact that his father should, according to his account, cry 'Cooee!' before seeing him. The other was his singular dying reference to a rat. He mumbled several words, you understand, but that was all that caught the son's ear. Now from this double point our research must commence, and we will begin it by presuming that what the lad says is absolutely true."

"What of this 'Cooee!' then?"

"Well, obviously it could not have been meant for the son. The son, as far as he knew, was in Bristol. It was mere chance that he was within earshot. The 'Cooee!' was meant to attract the attention of whoever it was that he had the appointment with. But 'Cooee' is a distinctly Australian cry, and one which is used between Australians. There is a strong presumption that the person whom McCarthy expected to meet him at Boscombe Pool was someone who had been in Australia."

"What of the rat, then?"

Sherlock Holmes took a folded paper from his pocket and flattened it out on the table. "This is a map of the colony of Victoria," he said. "I wired to Bristol for it last night." He put his hand over part of the map. "What do you read?" he asked.

"ARAT," I read.

"And now?" He raised his hand.

"BALLARAT."

"Quite so. That was the word the man uttered, and of which his son only caught the last two syllables. He was trying to utter the name of his murderer. So-and-so, of Ballarat."

"It is wonderful!" I exclaimed.

"It is obvious. And now, you see, I had narrowed the field down considerably. The possession of a gray garment was a third point which, granting the son's statement to be correct, was a certainty. We have come now out of mere vagueness to the definite conception of an Australian from Ballarat with a gray cloak."

"Certainly."

"And one who was at home in the district, for the pool can only be approached by the farm or by the estate, where strangers could hardly wander."

"Quite so."

"Then comes our expedition of to-day. By an examination of the ground I gained the trifling details which I gave to that imbecile, Lestrade, as to the personality of the criminal."

"But how did you gain them?"

"You know my method. It is founded upon the observance of trifles."

"His height, I know, that you might roughly judge from the length of his stride. His boots, too, might be told from their traces."

"Yes, they were peculiar boots."

"But his lameness?"

"The impression of his right foot was always less distinct than his left. He put less weight upon it. Why? Because he limped —he was lame."

"But his left-handedness?"

"You were yourself struck by the nature of the injury as recorded by the surgeon at the inquest. The blow was struck from immediately behind, and yet was upon the left side. Now, how can that be unless it were by a left-handed man? He had stood behind that tree during the interview between the father and son. He had even smoked there. I found the ash of a cigar, which my special knowledge of tobacco ashes enabled me to pronounce as an Indian cigar. I have, as you know, devoted some attention to this, and written a little monograph on the ashes of one hundred and forty different varieties of pipe, cigar, and cigarette tobacco. Having found the ash, I then looked round and discovered the stump among the moss where he had tossed it. It was an Indian cigar of the variety which are rolled in Rotterdam."

"And the cigar-holder?"

"I could see that the end had not been in his mouth. Therefore he used a holder. The tip had been cut off, not bitten off, but the cut was not a clean one, so I deduced a blunt penknife."

"Holmes," I said, "you have drawn a net round this man from which he cannot escape, and you have saved an innocent human life as truly as if you had cut the cord which was hanging him. I see the direction in which all this points. The culprit is——"

"Mr. John Turner," cried the hotel waiter, opening the door of our sitting-room, and ushering in a visitor.

The man who entered was a strange and impressive figure. His slow, limping step and bowed shoulders gave the appearance of decrepitude, and yet his hard, deep-lined, craggy features, and his enormous limbs showed that he was possessed of unusual strength of body and of character. His tangled beard, grizzled hair, and outstanding, drooping eyebrows combined to give an air of dignity and power to his appearance, but his face was of an ashen white, while his lips and the corners of his nostrils were tinged with a shade of blue. It was clear to me at a glance that he was in the grip of some deadly and chronic disease.

"Pray sit down on the sofa," said Holmes, gently. "You had my note?"

"Yes, the lodge-keeper brought it up. You said that you wished to see me here to avoid scandal."

"I thought people would talk if I went to the Hall."

"And why did you wish to see me?" He looked across at my companion with despair in his weary eyes, as though his question were already answered.

"Yes," said Holmes, answering the look rather than the words. "It is so. I know all about McCarthy."

The old man sank his face in his hands. "God help me!" he cried. "But I would not have let the young man come to harm. I give you my word that I would have spoken out if it went against him at the Assizes."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Holmes, gravely.

"I would have spoken now had it not been for my dear girl. It would break her heart—it will break her heart when she hears that I am arrested."

"It may not come to that," said Holmes.

"What!"

"I am no official agent. I understand that it was your daughter who required my presence here, and I am acting in her interests. Young McCarthy must be got off, however."

"I am a dying man," said old Turner. "I have had diabetes for years. My doctor says it is a question whether I shall live a month. Yet I would rather die under my own roof than in a jail."

Holmes rose and sat down at the table with his pen in his hand and a bundle of paper before him. "Just tell us the truth," he said. "I shall jot down the facts. You will sign it, and Watson here can witness it. Then I could produce your con-

fession at the last extremity to save young McCarthy. I promise you that I shall not use it unless it is absolutely needed."

"It's as well," said the old man. "It's a question whether I shall live to the Assizes, so it matters little to me, but I should wish to spare Alice the shock. And now I will make the thing clear to you; it has been a long time in the acting, but will not take me long to tell.

"You didn't know this dead man, McCarthy. He was a devil incarnate. I tell you that. God keep you out of the clutches of such a man as he. His grip has been upon me these twenty years, and he has blasted my life. I'll tell you first how I came to be in his power.

"It was in the early sixties at the diggings. I was a young chap then, hot-blooded and reckless, ready to turn my hand to anything; I got among bad companions, took to drink, had no luck with my claim, took to the bush, and in a word became what you would call over here a highway robber. There were six of us, and we had a wild, free life of it, sticking up a station from time to time, or stopping the wagons on the road to the diggings. Black Jack of Ballarat was the name I went under, and our party is still remembered in the colony as the Ballarat Gang.

"One day a gold convoy came down from Ballarat to Melbourne, and we lay in wait for it and attacked it. There were six troopers and six of us, so it was a close thing, but we emptied four of their saddles at the first volley. Three of our boys were killed, however, before we got the swag. I put my pistol to the head of the wagon-driver, who was this very man McCarthy. I wish to the Lord that I had shot him then, but I spared him, though I saw his wicked little eyes fixed on my face, as though to remember every feature. We got away with the gold, became wealthy men, and made our way over to England without being suspected. There I parted from my old pals, and determined to settle down to a quiet and respectable life. I bought this estate, which chanced to be in the market, and I set myself to do a little good with my money, to make up for the way in which I had earned it. I married, too, and though my wife died young, she left me my dear little Alice. Even when she was just a baby her wee hand seemed to lead me down the right path as nothing else had ever done. In a word, I turned over a new leaf, and did my best to make up for the past. All was going well when McCarthy laid his grip upon me.

"I had gone up to town about an investment and I met him in Regent Street with hardly a coat to his back or a boot to his foot.

"'Here we are, Jack,' says he, touching me on the arm; 'we'll be as good as a family to you. There's two of us, me and my son, and you can have the keeping of us. If you don't—it's a fine, law-abiding country is England, and there's always a policeman within hail.'

"Well, down they came to the West country, there was no shaking them off, and there they have lived rent-free on my best land ever since. There was no rest for me, no peace, no forgetfulness; turn where I would, there was his cunning, grinning face at my elbow. It grew worse as Alice grew up, for he soon saw I was more afraid of her knowing my past than of the police. Whatever he wanted he must have, and whatever it was I gave him without question—land, money, houses—until at last he asked a thing which I could not give. He asked for Alice.

"His son, you see, had grown up, and so had my girl, and as I was known to be in weak health, it seemed a fine stroke to him that his lad should step into the whole property. But there I was firm. I would not have his cursed stock mixed with mine; not that I had any dislike to the lad, but his blood was in him, and that was enough. I stood firm. McCarthy threatened. I braved him to do his worst. We were to meet at the pool midway between our houses to talk it over.

"When I went down there I found him talking with his son, so I smoked a cigar, and waited behind a tree until he should be alone. But as I listened to his talk all that was black and bitter in me seemed to come uppermost. He was urging his son to marry my daughter with as little regard for what she might think as if she were a slut from off the streets. It drove me mad to think that I and all that I held most dear should be in the power of such a man as this. Could I not snap the bond? I was already a dying and a desperate man. Though clear of mind and fairly strong of limb, I knew that my own fate was sealed. But my memory and my girl! Both could be saved, if I could but silence that foul tongue. I did it, Mr. Holmes. I would do it again. Deeply as I have sinned, I have led a life of martyrdom to atone for it. But that my girl should be entangled in the same meshes which held me was more than I could suffer. I struck him down with no more compunction than if he had

been some foul and venomous beast. His cry brought back his son; but I had gained the cover of the wood, though I was forced to go back to fetch the cloak which I had dropped in my flight. That is the true story, gentlemen, of all that occurred."

"Well, it is not for me to judge you," said Holmes, as the old man signed the statement which had been drawn out. "I pray that we may never be exposed to such a temptation."

"I pray not, sir. And what do you intend to do?"

"In view of your health, nothing. You are yourself aware that you will soon have to answer for your deeds at a higher Court than the Assizes. I will keep your confession, and if McCarthy is condemned, I shall be forced to use it. If not, it shall never be seen by mortal eye; and your secret, whether you be alive or dead, shall be safe with us."

"Farewell, then," said the old man, solemnly. "Your own death-beds, when they come, will be the easier for the thought of the peace which you have given to mine." Tottering and shaking in all his giant frame, he stumbled slowly from the room.

"God help us!" said Holmes, after a long silence. "Why does Fate play such tricks with poor helpless worms? I never hear of such a case as this that I do not think of Baxter's words, and say, 'There, but for the grace of God, goes Sherlock Holmes.'"

James McCarthy was acquitted at the Assizes, on the strength of a number of objections which had been drawn out by Holmes, and submitted to the defending counsel. Old Turner lived for seven months after our interview, but he is now dead; and there is every prospect that the son and daughter may come to live happily together, in ignorance of the black cloud which rests upon their past.

THE LENTON CROFT ROBBERIES

Arthur Morrison *was born in Kent, England, on November 1, 1863. After a brief clerkship in the civil service, he entered journalism in 1890, joining the editorial staff of the "National Observer." Several of his early realistic sketches were, at the suggestion of the poet, W. E. Henley, issued in book form under the title of "Tales from Mean Street," and immediately attracted favorable attention. The first volume of his famous detective stories—"Martin Hewitt, Investigator"—appeared in 1894; and this was followed by "Chronicles of Martin Hewitt" in 1895, "Adventures of Martin Hewitt" in 1896, and "The Red Triangle" in 1903.*

Mr. Morrison's other books include "The Dorrington Deed-Box" (1897), "Cunning Murrell" (1900), "The Hole in the Wall" (1902), "The Green Eye of Goona" (1904), and "Green Ginger" (1909). He has written three plays—"That Brute Simmons" (with H. C. Sargent), "A Stroke of Business" (with H. W. C. Newte), and "The Dumb Cake" (with Richard Pryce).

Mr. Morrison is well known as a collector of objets d'art and a writer on Oriental art. A collection made by him of Chinese and Japanese old-master paintings now hangs in the British Museum. He published "The Painters of Japan" in 1911.

The Martin Hewitt story reprinted herewith is the first episode in "Martin Hewitt, Investigator."

THE LENTON CROFT ROBBERIES

By Arthur Morrison

Those who retain any memory of the great law cases of fifteen or twenty years back will remember, at least, the title of that extraordinary will case, "Bartley *v.* Bartley and others," which occupied the Probate Court for some weeks on end, and caused an amount of public interest rarely accorded to any but the cases considered in the other division of the same court. The case itself was noted for the large quantity of remarkable and unusual evidence presented by the plaintiff's side—evidence that took the other party completely by surprise, and overthrew their case like a house of cards. The affair will, perhaps, be more readily recalled as the occasion of the sudden rise to eminence in their profession of Messrs. Crellan, Hunt & Crellan, solicitors for the plaintiff—a result due entirely to the wonderful ability shown in this case of building up, apparently out of nothing, a smashing weight of irresistible evidence. That the firm has since maintained—indeed, enhanced—the position it then won for itself need scarcely be said here; its name is familiar to everybody. But there are not many of the outside public who know that the credit of the whole performance was primarily due to a young clerk in the employ of Messrs. Crellan who had been given charge of the seemingly desperate task of collecting evidence in the case.

This Mr. Martin Hewitt had, however, full credit and reward for his exploit from his firm and from their client, and more than one other firm of lawyers engaged in contentious work made good offers to entice Hewitt to change his employers. Instead of this, however, he determined to work independently for the future, having conceived the idea of making a regular business of doing, on behalf of such clients as might retain him, similar work to that he had just done with such conspicuous success for Messrs. Crellan, Hunt & Crellan. This was the beginning of the private detective business of Martin Hewitt, and

his action at that time has been completely justified by the brilliant professional successes he has since achieved.

His business has always been conducted in the most private manner, and he has always declined the help of professional assistants, preferring to carry out himself such of the many investigations offered him as he could manage. He has always maintained that he has never lost by this policy, since the chance of his refusing a case begets competition for his services, and his fees rise by a natural process. At the same time, no man could know better how to employ casual assistance at the right time.

Some curiosity has been expressed as to Mr. Martin Hewitt's system, and, as he himself always consistently maintains that he has no system beyond a judicious use of ordinary faculties, I intend setting forth in detail a few of the more interesting of his cases in order that the public may judge for itself if I am right in estimating Mr. Hewitt's "ordinary faculties" as faculties very extraordinary indeed. He is not a man who has made many friendships (this, probably, for professional reasons), notwithstanding his genial and companionable manners. I myself first made his acquaintance as a result of an accident resulting in a fire at the old house in which Hewitt's office was situated, and in an upper floor of which I occupied bachelor chambers. I was able to help in saving a quantity of extremely important papers relating to his business, and, while repairs were being made, allowed him to lock them in an old wall-safe in one of my rooms which the fire had scarcely damaged.

The acquaintance thus begun has lasted many years, and has become a rather close friendship. I have even accompanied Hewitt on some of his expeditions, and, in a humble way, helped him. Such of the cases, however, as I personally saw nothing of I have put into narrative form from the particulars given me.

"I consider you, Brett," he said, addressing me, "the most remarkable journalist alive. Not because you're particularly clever, you know, because, between ourselves, I hope you'll admit you're not; but because you have known something of me and my doings for some years, and have never yet been guilty of giving away any of my little business secrets you may have become acquainted with. I'm afraid you're not so enterprising a journalist as some, Brett. But now, since you ask, you shall write something—if you think it worth while."

This he said, as he said most things, with a cheery, chaffing

good-nature that would have been, perhaps, surprising to a stranger who thought of him only as a grim and mysterious discoverer of secrets and crimes. Indeed, the man had always as little of the aspect of the conventional detective as may be imagined. Nobody could appear more cordial or less observant in manner, although there was to be seen a certain sharpness of the eye —which might, after all, only be the twinkle of good-humor.

I *did* think it worth while to write something of Martin Hewitt's investigations, and a description of one of his adventures follows.

* * * * * * *

At the head of the first flight of a dingy staircase leading up from an ever-open portal in a street by the Strand stood a door, the dusty ground-glass upper panel of which carried in its center the single word "Hewitt," while at its right-hand lower corner, in smaller letters, "Clerk's Office" appeared. On a morning when the clerks in the ground-floor offices had barely hung up their hats, a short, well-dressed young man, wearing spectacles, hastening to open the dusty door, ran into the arms of another man who suddenly issued from it.

"I beg pardon," the first said. "Is this Hewitt's Detective Agency Office?"

"Yes, I believe you will find it so," the other replied. He was a stoutish, clean-shaven man, of middle height, and of a cheerful, round countenance. "You'd better speak to the clerk."

In the little outer office the visitor was met by a sharp lad with inky fingers, who presented him with a pen and a printed slip. The printed slip having been filled with the visitor's name and present business, and conveyed through an inner door, the lad reappeared with an invitation to the private office. There, behind a writing-table, sat the stoutish man himself, who had only just advised an appeal to the clerk.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lloyd—Mr. Vernon Lloyd," he said affably, looking again at the slip. "You'll excuse my care to start even with my visitors—I must, you know. You come from Sir James Norris, I see."

"Yes; I am his secretary. I have only to ask you to go straight to Lenton Croft at once, if you can, on very important business. Sir James would have wired, but had not your pre-

cise address. Can you go by the next train? Eleven-thirty is the first available from Paddington."

"Quite possibly. Do you know anything of the business?"

"It is a case of a robbery in the house, or, rather, I fancy, of several robberies. Jewelry has been stolen from rooms occupied by visitors to the Croft. The first case occurred some months ago—nearly a year ago, in fact. Last night there was another. But I think you had better get the details on the spot. Sir James has told me to telegraph if you are coming, so that he may meet you himself at the station; and I must hurry, as his drive to the station will be rather a long one. Then I take it you will go, Mr. Hewitt? Twyford is the station."

"Yes, I shall come, and by the 11:30. Are you going by that train yourself?"

"No, I have several things to attend to now I am in town. Good-morning; I shall wire at once."

Mr. Martin Hewitt locked the drawer of his table and sent his clerk for a cab.

At Twyford Station Sir James Norris was waiting with a dog-cart. Sir James was a tall, florid man of fifty or thereabout, known away from home as something of a county historian, and nearer his own parts as a great supporter of the hunt, and a gentleman much troubled with poachers. As soon as he and Hewitt had found one another the baronet hurried the detective into his dog-cart. "We've something over seven miles to drive," he said, "and I can tell you all about this wretched business as we go. That is why I came for you myself, and alone."

Hewitt nodded.

"I have sent for you, as Lloyd probably told you, because of a robbery at my place last evening. It appears, as far as I can guess, to be one of three by the same hand, or by the same gang. Late yesterday afternoon——"

"Pardon me, Sir James," Hewitt interrupted, "but I think I must ask you to begin at the first robbery and tell me the whole tale in proper order. It makes things clearer, and sets them in their proper shape."

"Very well! Eleven months ago, or thereabout, I had rather a large party of visitors, and among them Colonel Heath and Mrs. Heath—the lady being a relative of my own late wife. Colonel Heath has not been long retired, you know—used to be political resident in an Indian native state. Mrs. Heath had rather a good stock of jewelry of one sort and another, about the

most valuable piece being a bracelet set with a particularly fine pearl—quite an exceptional pearl, in fact—that had been one of a heap of presents from the maharajah of his state when Heath left India.

"It was a very noticeable bracelet, the gold setting being a mere feather-weight piece of native filigree work—almost too fragile to trust on the wrist—and the pearl being, as I have said, of a size and quality not often seen. Well, Heath and his wife arrived late one evening, and after lunch the following day, most of the men being off by themselves,—shooting, I think,—my daughter, my sister (who is very often down here), and Mrs. Heath took it into their heads to go walking—fern-hunting, and so on. My sister was rather long dressing, and, while they waited, my daughter went into Mrs. Heath's room, where Mrs. Heath turned over all her treasures to show her, as women do, you know. When my sister was at last ready, they came straight away, leaving the things littering about the room rather than stay longer to pack them up. The bracelet, with other things, was on the dressing-table then."

"One moment. As to the door?"

"They locked it. As they came away my daughter suggested turning the key, as we had one or two new servants about."

"And the window?"

"That they left open, as I was going to tell you. Well, they went on their walk and came back, with Lloyd (whom they had met somewhere) carrying their ferns for them. It was dusk and almost dinner-time. Mrs. Heath went straight to her room, and —the bracelet was gone."

"Was the room disturbed?"

"Not a bit. Everything was precisely where it had been left, except the bracelet. The door hadn't been tampered with, but of course the window was open, as I have told you."

"You called the police, of course?"

"Yes, and had a man from Scotland Yard down in the morning. He seemed a pretty smart fellow, and the first thing he noticed on the dressing-table, within an inch or two of where the bracelet had been, was a match, which had been lit and thrown down. Now nobody about the house had had occasion to use a match in that room that day, and, if they had, certainly wouldn't have thrown it on the cover of the dressing-table. So that, presuming the thief to have used that match, the robbery must have been committed when the room was getting dark—

immediately before Mrs. Heath returned, in fact. The thief had evidently struck the match, passed it hurriedly over the various trinkets lying about, and taken the most valuable."

"Nothing else was even moved?"

"Nothing at all. Then the thief must have escaped by the window, although it was not quite clear how. The walking party approached the house with a full view of the window, but saw nothing, although the robbery must have been actually taking place a moment or two before they turned up.

"There was no water-pipe within any practicable distance of the window, but a ladder usually kept in the stable-yard was found lying along the edge of the lawn. The gardener explained, however, that he had put the ladder there after using it himself early in the afternoon."

"Of course it might easily have been used again after that and put back."

"Just what the Scotland Yard man said. He was pretty sharp, too, on the gardener, but very soon decided that he knew nothing of it. No stranger had been seen in the neighborhood, nor had passed the lodge gates. Besides, as the detective said, it scarcely seemed the work of a stranger. A stranger could scarcely have known enough to go straight to the room where a lady—only arrived the day before—had left a valuable jewel, and away again without being seen. So all the people about the house were suspected in turn. The servants offered, in a body, to have their boxes searched, and this was done; everything was turned over, from the butler's to the new kitchen-maid's. I don't know that I should have had this carried quite so far if I had been the loser myself, but it was my guest, and I was in such a horrible position. Well, there's little more to be said about that, unfortunately. Nothing came of it all, and the thing's as great a mystery now as ever. I believed the Scotland Yard man got as far as suspecting *me* before he gave it up altogether, but give it up he did in the end. I think that's all I know about the first robbery. Is it clear?"

"Oh, yes; I shall probably want to ask a few questions when I have seen the place, but they can wait. What next?"

"Well," Sir James pursued, "the next was a very trumpery affair, that I should have forgotten all about, probably, if it hadn't been for one circumstance. Even now I hardly think it could have been the work of the same hand. Four months or thereabout after Mrs. Heath's disaster—in February of this

year, in fact—Mrs. Armitage, a young widow, who had been a school-fellow of my daughter's, stayed with us for a week or so. The girls don't trouble about the London season, you know, and I have no town house, so they were glad to have their old friend here for a little in the dull time. Mrs. Armitage is a very active young lady, and was scarcely in the house half-an-hour before she arranged a drive in a pony-cart with Eva—my daughter—to look up old people in the village that she used to know before she was married. So they set off in the afternoon, and made such a round of it that they were late for dinner. Mrs. Armitage had a small plain gold brooch—not at all valuable, you know; two or three pounds, I suppose—which she used to pin up a cloak or anything of that sort. Before she went out she stuck this in the pin-cushion on her dressing-table, and left a ring—rather a good one, I believe—lying close by."

"This," asked Hewitt, "was not in the room that Mrs. Heath had occupied, I take it?"

"No; this was in another part of the building. Well, the brooch went—taken, evidently, by some one in a deuce of a hurry, for, when Mrs. Armitage got back to her room, there was the pin-cushion with a little tear in it, where the brooch had been simply snatched off. But the curious thing was that the ring—worth a dozen of the brooch—was left where it had been put. Mrs. Armitage didn't remember whether or not she had locked the door herself, although she found it locked when she returned; but my niece, who was indoors all the time, went and tried it once—because she remembered that a gas-fitter was at work on the landing near by—and found it safely locked. The gas-fitter, whom we didn't know at the time, but who since seems to be quite an honest fellow, was ready to swear that nobody but my niece had been to the door while he was in sight of it—which was almost all the time. As to the window, the sash-line had broken that very morning, and Mrs. Armitage had propped open the bottom half about eight or ten inches with a brush; and, when she returned, that brush, sash, and all were exactly as she had left them. Now I scarcely need tell *you* what an awkward job it must have been for anybody to get noiselessly in at that unsupported window; and how unlikely he would have been to replace it, with the brush, exactly as he found it."

"Just so. I suppose the brooch was really gone? I mean, there was no chance of Mrs. Armitage having mislaid it?"

"Oh, none at all! There was a most careful search."

"Then, as to getting in at the window, would it have been easy?"

"Well, yes," Sir James replied; "yes, perhaps it would. It is a first-floor window, and it looks over the roof and skylight of the billiard-room. I built the billiard-room myself—built it out from a smoking-room just at this corner. It would be easy enough to get at the window from the billiard-room roof. But, then," he added, "that couldn't have been the way. Somebody or other was in the billiard-room the whole time, and nobody could have got over the roof (which is nearly all skylight) without being seen and heard. I was there myself for an hour or two, taking a little practise."

"Well, was anything done?"

"Strict enquiry was made among the servants, of course, but nothing came of it. It was such a small matter that Mrs. Armitage wouldn't hear of my calling in the police or anything of that sort, although I felt pretty certain that there must be a dishonest servant about somewhere. A servant might take a plain brooch, you know, who would feel afraid of a valuable ring, the loss of which would be made a greater matter of."

"Well, yes, perhaps so, in the case of an inexperienced thief, who also would be likely to snatch up whatever she took in a hurry. But I'm doubtful. What made you connect these two robberies together?"

"Nothing whatever—for some months. They seemed quite of a different sort. But scarcely more than a month ago I met Mrs. Armitage at Brighton, and we talked, among other things, of the previous robbery—that of Mrs. Heath's bracelet. I described the circumstances pretty minutely, and, when I mentioned the match found on the table, she said: 'How strange! Why, *my* thief left a match on the dressing-table when he took my poor little brooch!'"

Hewitt nodded. "Yes," he said. "A spent match, of course?"

"Yes, of course, a spent match. She noticed it lying close by the pin-cushion, but threw it away without mentioning the circumstance. Still, it seemed rather curious to me that a match should be lit and dropped, in each case, on the dressing-cover an inch from where the article was taken. I mentioned it to Lloyd when I got back, and he agreed that it seemed significant."

"Scarcely," said Hewitt, shaking his head. "Scarcely, so

far, to be called significant, although worth following up. Everybody uses matches in the dark, you know."

"Well, at any rate, the coincidence appealed to me so far that it struck me it might be worth while to describe the brooch to the police in order that they could trace it if it had been pawned. They had tried that, of course, over the bracelet without any result, but I fancied the shot might be worth making, and might possibly lead us on the track of the more serious robbery."

"Quite so. It was the right thing to do. Well?"

"Well, they found it. A woman had pawned it in London—at a shop in Chelsea. But that was sometime before, and the pawnbroker had clean forgotten all about the woman's appearance. The name and address she gave were false. So that was the end of that business."

"Had any of your servants left you between the time the brooch was lost and the date of the pawn ticket?"

"No."

"Were all your servants at home on the day the brooch was pawned?"

"Oh, yes! I made that enquiry myself."

"Very good! What next?"

"Yesterday—and this is what made me send for you. My late wife's sister came here last Tuesday, and we gave her the room from which Mrs. Heath lost her bracelet. She had with her a very old-fashioned brooch, containing a miniature of her father, and set in front with three very fine brilliants and a few smaller stones. Here we are, though, at the Croft. I'll tell you the rest indoors."

Hewitt laid his hand on the baronet's arm. "Don't pull up, Sir James," he said. "Drive a little further. I should like to have a general idea of the whole case before we go in."

"Very good!" Sir James Norris straightened the horse's head again and went on. "Late yesterday afternoon, as my sister-in-law was changing her dress, she left her room for a moment to speak to my daughter in her room, almost adjoining. She was gone no more than three minutes, or five at most, but on her return the brooch, which had been left on the table, had gone. Now the window was shut fast, and had not been tampered with. Of course the door was open, but so was my daughter's, and anybody walking near must have been heard. But the strangest circumstance, and one that almost makes me wonder whether I have been awake to-day or not, was that there lay *a*

used match on the very spot, as nearly as possible, where the brooch had been—and it was broad daylight!"

Hewitt rubbed his nose and looked thoughtfully before him. "Um—curious, certainly," he said. "Anything else?"

"Nothing more than you shall see for yourself. I have had the room locked and watched till you could examine it. My sister-in-law had heard of your name, and suggested that you should be called in; so, of course, I did exactly as she wanted. That she should have lost that brooch, of all things, in my house is most unfortunate; you see, there was some small difference about the thing between my late wife and her sister when their mother died and left it. It's almost worse than the Heaths' bracelet business, and altogether I'm not pleased with things, I can assure you. See what a position it is for me! Here are three ladies, in the space of one year, robbed one after another in this mysterious fashion in my house, and I can't find the thief! It's horrible! People will be afraid to come near the place. And I can do nothing!"

"Ah, well, we'll see. Perhaps we had better turn back now. By-the-bye, were you thinking of having any alterations or additions made to your house?"

"No. What makes you ask?"

"I think you might at least consider the question of painting and decorating, Sir James—or, say, putting up another coach-house, or something. Because I should like to be (to the servants) the architect—or the builder, if you please—come to look around. You haven't told any of them about this business?"

"Not a word. Nobody knows but my relatives and Lloyd. I took every precaution myself, at once. As to your little disguise, be the architect by all means, and do as you please. If you can only find this thief and put an end to this horrible state of affairs, you'll do me the greatest service I've ever asked for—and as to your fee, I'll gladly make it whatever is usual, and three hundred in addition."

Martin Hewitt bowed. "You're very generous, Sir James, and you may be sure I'll do what I can. As a professional man, of course, a good fee always stimulates my interest, although this case of yours certainly seems interesting enough by itself."

"Most extraordinary! Don't you think so? Here are three persons, all ladies, all in my house, two even in the same room, each successively robbed of a piece of jewelry, each from a dress-

ing-table, and a used match left behind in every case. All in the most difficult—one would say impossible—circumstances for a thief, and yet there is no clue!"

"Well, we won't say that just yet, Sir James; we must see. And we must guard against any undue predisposition to consider the robberies in a lump. Here we are at the lodge gate again. Is that your gardener—the man who left the ladder by the lawn on the first occasion you spoke of?" Mr. Hewitt nodded in the direction of a man who was clipping a box border.

"Yes; will you ask him anything?"

"No, no; at any rate, not now. Remember the building alterations. I think, if there is no objection, I will look first at the room that the lady—Mrs. ——" Hewitt looked up enquiringly.

"My sister-in-law? Mrs. Cazenove. Oh, yes! you shall come to her room at once."

"Thank you. And I think Mrs. Cazenove had better be there."

They alighted, and a boy from the lodge led the horse and dog-cart away.

Mrs. Cazenove was a thin and faded, but quick and energetic, lady of middle age. She bent her head very slightly on learning Martin Hewitt's name, and said: "I must thank you, Mr. Hewitt, for your very prompt attention. I need scarcely say that any help you can afford in tracing the thief who has my property—whoever it may be—will make me most grateful. My room is quite ready for you to examine."

The room was on the second floor—the top floor at that part of the building. Some slight confusion of small articles of dress was observable in parts of the room.

"This, I take it," enquired Hewitt, "is exactly as it was at the time the brooch was missed?"

"Precisely," Mrs. Cazenove answered. "I have used another room, and put myself to some other inconveniences, to avoid any disturbance."

Hewitt stood before the dressing-table. "Then this is the used match," he observed, "exactly where it was found?"

"Yes."

"Where was the brooch?"

"I should say almost on the very same spot. Certainly no more than a very inches away."

Hewitt examined the match closely. "It is burned very lit-

tle," he remarked. "It would appear to have gone out at once. Could you hear it struck?"

"I heard nothing whatever; absolutely nothing."

"If you will step into Miss Norris's room now for a moment," Hewitt suggested, "we will try an experiment. Tell me if you hear matches struck, and how many. Where is the match-stand?"

The match-stand proved to be empty, but matches were found in Miss Norris's room, and the test was made. Each striking could be heard distinctly, even with one of the doors pushed to.

"Both your own door and Miss Norris's were open, I understand; the window shut and fastened inside as it is now, and nothing but the brooch was disturbed?"

"Yes, that was so."

"Thank you, Mrs. Cazenove. I don't think I need trouble you further just at present. I think, Sir James," Hewitt added, turning to the baronet, who was standing by the door—"I think we will see the other room and take a walk outside the house, if you please. I suppose, by-the-bye, that there is no getting at the matches left behind on the first and second occasions?"

"No," Sir James answered. "Certainly not here. The Scotland Yard man may have kept his."

The room that Mrs. Armitage had occupied presented no peculiar feature. A few feet below the window the roof of the billiard-room was visible, consisting largely of skylight. Hewitt glanced casually about the walls, ascertained that the furniture and hangings had not been materially changed since the second robbery, and expressed his desire to see the windows from the outside. Before leaving the room, however, he wished to know the names of any persons who were known to have been about the house on the occasions of all three robberies.

"Just carry your mind back, Sir James," he said. "Begin with yourself, for instance. Where were you at these times?"

"When Mrs. Heath lost her bracelet, I was in Tagley Wood all the afternoon. When Mrs. Armitage was robbed, I believe I was somewhere about the place most of the time she was out. Yesterday I was down at the farm." Sir James's face broadened. "I don't know whether you call those suspicious movements," he added, and laughed.

"Not at all; I only asked you so that, remembering your own movements, you might the better recall those of the rest of the

household. Was anybody, to your knowledge—*anybody,* mind—in the house on all three occasions?"

"Well, you know, it's quite impossible to answer for all the servants. You'll only get that by direct questioning—I can't possibly remember things of that sort. As to the family and visitors—why, you don't suspect any of them, do you?"

"I don't suspect a soul, Sir James," Hewitt answered, beaming genially, "not a soul. You see, I *can't* suspect people till I know something about where they were. It's quite possible there will be independent evidence enough as it is, but you must help me if you can. The visitors, now. Was there any visitor here each time—or even on the first and last occasions only?"

"No, not one. And my own sister, perhaps you will be pleased to know, was only there at the time of the first robbery."

"Just so! And your daughter, as I have gathered, was clearly absent from the spot each time—indeed, was in company with the party robbed. Your niece, now?"

"Why, hang it all, Mr. Hewitt, I can't talk of my niece as a suspected criminal! The poor girl's under my protection, and I really can't allow——"

Hewitt raised his hand and shook his head deprecatingly.

"My dear sir, haven't I said that I don't suspect a soul? *Do* let me know how the people were distributed, as nearly as possible. Let me see. It was your niece, I think, who found that Mrs. Armitage's door was locked—this door, in fact—on the day she lost her brooch?"

"Yes, it was."

"Just so—at the time when Mrs. Armitage herself had forgotten whether she locked it or not. And yesterday—was she out then?"

"No, I think not. Indeed, she goes out very little—her health is usually bad. She was indoors, too, at the time of the Heath robbery, since you ask. But come, now, I don't like this. It's ridiculous to suppose that *she* knows anything of it."

"I don't suppose it, as I have said. I am only asking for information. That is all your resident family, I take it, and you know nothing of anybody else's movements—except, perhaps, Mr. Lloyd's?"

"Lloyd? Well, you know yourself that he was out with the ladies when the first robbery took place. As to the others, I don't remember. Yesterday he was probably in his room, writing. I think that acquits *him,* eh?" Sir James looked quiz-

zically into the broad face of the affable detective, who smiled and replied:

"Oh, of course nobody can be in two places at once, else what would become of the *alibi* as an institution? But, as I have said, I am only setting my facts in order. Now, you see, we get down to the servants—unless some stranger is the party wanted. Shall we go outside now?"

Lenton Croft was a large, desultory sort of house, nowhere more than three floors high, and mostly only two. It had been added to bit by bit, till it zig-zagged about its site, as Sir James Norris expressed it, "like a game of dominoes." Hewitt scrutinized its external features carefully as they strolled round, and stopped some little while before the windows of the two bedrooms he had just seen from the inside. Presently they approached the stables and coach-house, where a groom was washing the wheels of the dog-cart.

"Do you mind my smoking?" Hewitt asked Sir James. "Perhaps you will take a cigar yourself—they are not so bad, I think. I will ask your man for a light."

Sir James felt for his own match-box, but Hewitt had gone, and was lighting his cigar with a match from a box handed him by the groom. A smart little terrier was trotting about by the coach-house, and Hewitt stopped to rub its head. Then he made some observation about the dog which enlisted the groom's interest, and was soon absorbed in a chat with the man. Sir James, waiting a little way off, tapped the stones rather impatiently with his foot, and presently moved away.

For full a quarter of an hour Hewitt chatted with the groom, and, when at last he came away and overtook Sir James, that gentleman was about reentering the house.

"I beg your pardon, Sir James," Hewitt said, "for leaving you in that unceremonious fashion to talk to your groom, but a dog, Sir James,—a good dog,—will draw me anywhere."

"Oh!" replied Sir James shortly.

"There is one other thing," Hewitt went on, disregarding the other's curtness, "that I should like to know: There are two windows directly below that of the room occupied yesterday by Mrs. Cazenove—one on each floor. What rooms do they light?"

"That on the ground floor is the morning-room; the other is Mr. Lloyd's—my secretary. A sort of study or sitting-room."

"Now you will see at once, Sir James," Hewitt pursued, with an affable determination to win the baronet back to good-

humor—" you will see at once that, if a ladder had been used in Mrs. Heath's case, anybody looking from either of these rooms would save seen it."

"Of course! The Scotland Yard man questioned everybody as to that, but nobody seemed to have been in either of the rooms when the thing occurred; at any rate, nobody saw anything."

"Still, I think I should like to look out of those windows myself; it will, at least, give me an idea of what *was* in view and what was not, if anybody had been there."

Sir James Norris led the way to the morning-room. As they reached the door a young lady, carrying a book and walking very languidly, came out. Hewitt stepped aside to let her pass, and afterward said interrogatively: "Miss Norris, your daughter, Sir John?"

"No, my niece. Do you want to ask her anything? Dora, my dear," Sir James added, following her in the corridor, "this is Mr. Hewitt, who is investigating these wretched robberies for me. I think he would like to hear if you remember anything happening at any of the three times."

The lady bowed slightly, and said in a plaintive drawl: "I, uncle? Really, I don't remember anything; nothing at all."

"You found Mrs. Armitage's door locked, I believe," asked Hewitt, "when you tried it, on the afternoon when she lost her brooch?"

"Oh, yes; I believe it was locked. Yes, it was."

"Had the key been left in?"

"The key? Oh, no! I think not; no."

"Do you remember anything out of the common happening—anything whatever, no matter how trivial—on the day Mrs. Heath lost her bracelet?"

"No, really, I don't. I can't remember at all."

"Nor yesterday?"

"No, nothing. I don't remember anything."

"Thank you," said Hewitt hastily; "thank you. Now the morning-room, Sir James."

In the morning-room Hewitt stayed but a few seconds, doing little more than casually glance out of the windows. In the room above he took a little longer time. It was a comfortable room, but with rather effeminate indications about its contents. Little pieces of draped silk-work hung about the furniture, and Japanese silk fans decorated the mantel-piece. Near the window

was a cage containing a gray parrot, and the writing-table was decorated with two vases of flowers.

"Lloyd makes himself pretty comfortable, eh?" Sir James observed. "But it isn't likely anybody would be here while he was out, at the time that bracelet went."

"No," replied Hewitt meditatively. "No, I suppose not."

He stared thoughtfully out of the window, and then, still deep in thought, rattled at the wires of the cage with a quill tooth-pick and played a moment with the parrot. Then, looking up at the window again, he said: "That is Mr. Lloyd, isn't it, coming back in a fly?"

"Yes, I think so. Is there anything else you would care to see here?"

"No, thank you," Hewitt replied; "I don't think there is."

They went down to the smoking-room, and Sir James went away to speak to his secretary. When he returned, Hewitt said quietly: "I think, Sir James—I *think* that I shall be able to give you your thief presently."

"What! Have you a clue? Who do you think? I began to believe you were hopelessly stumped."

"Well, yes. I have rather a good clue, although I can't tell you much about it just yet. But it is so good a clue that I should like to know now whether you are determined to prosecute when you have the criminal?"

"Why, bless me, of course," Sir James replied with surprise. "It doesn't rest with me, you know—the property belongs to my friends. And even if *they* were disposed to let the thing slide, I shouldn't allow it—I couldn't, after they had been robbed in my house."

"Of course, of course! Then, if I can, I should like to send a message to Twyford by somebody perfectly trustworthy—not a servant. Could anybody go?"

"Well, there's Lloyd, although he's only just back from his journey. But, if it's important, he'll go."

"It is important. The fact is we must have a policeman or two here this evening, and I'd like Mr. Lloyd to fetch them without telling anybody else."

Sir James rang, and, in response to his message, Mr. Lloyd appeared. While Sir James gave his secretary his instructions, Hewitt strolled to the door of the smoking-room, and intercepted the latter as he came out.

"I'm sorry to give you this trouble, Mr. Lloyd," he said, "but

I must stay here myself for a little, and somebody who can be trusted must go. Will you just bring back a police-constable with you? or rather two—two would be better. That is all that is wanted. You won't let the servants know, will you? Of course there will be a female searcher at the Twyford police-station? Ah—of course. Well, you needn't bring her, you know. That sort of thing is done at the station." And, chatting thus confidentially, Martin Hewitt saw him off.

When Hewitt returned to the smoking-room, Sir James said suddenly: "Why, bless my soul, Mr. Hewitt, we haven't fed you! I'm awfully sorry. We came in rather late for lunch, you know, and this business has bothered me so I clean forgot everything else. There's no dinner till seven, so you'd better let me give you something now. I'm really sorry. Come along."

"Thank you, Sir James," Hewitt replied; "I won't take much. A few biscuits, perhaps, or something of that sort. And, by-the-bye, if you don't mind, I rather think I should like to take it alone. The fact is I want to go over this case thoroughly by myself. Can you put me in a room?"

"Any room you like. Where will you go? The dining-room's rather large, but there's my study, that's pretty snug, or——"

"Perhaps I can go into Mr. Lloyd's room for half-an-hour or so; I don't think he'll mind, and it's pretty comfortable."

"Certainly, if you'd like. I'll tell them to send you whatever they've got."

"Thank you very much. Perhaps they'll also send me a lump of sugar and a walnut; it's—it's just a little fad of mine."

"A—what? A lump of sugar and a walnut?" Sir James stopped for a moment, with his hand on the bell-rope. "Oh, certainly, if you'd like it; certainly," he added, and stared after this detective of curious tastes as he left the room.

When the vehicle bringing back the secretary and the policemen drew up on the drive, Martin Hewitt left the room on the first floor and proceeded downstairs. On the landing he met Sir James Norris and Mrs. Cazenove, who stared with astonishment on perceiving that the detective carried in his hand the parrot-cage.

"I think our business is about brought to a head now," Hewitt remarked on the stairs. "Here are the police-officers from Twyford." The men were standing in the hall with Mr. Lloyd, who, catching sight of the cage in Hewitt's hand, paled suddenly.

"This is the person who will be charged, I think," Hewitt

pursued, addressing the officers, and indicating Lloyd with his finger.

"What, Lloyd?" gasped Sir James, aghast. "No—not Lloyd—nonsense!"

"He doesn't seem to think it nonsense himself, does he?" Hewitt placidly observed. Lloyd had sunk on a chair, and, gray of face, was staring blindly at the man he had run against at the office door that morning. His lips moved in spasms, but there was no sound. The wilted flower fell from his button-hole to the floor, but he did not move.

"This is his accomplice," Hewitt went on, placing the parrot and cage on the hall table, "though I doubt whether there will be any use in charging *him*. Eh, Polly?"

The parrot put his head aside and chuckled. "Hullo, Polly!" it quietly gurgled. "Come along!"

Sir James Norris was hopelessly bewildered. "Lloyd—Lloyd," he said, under his breath, "Lloyd—and that!"

"This was his little messenger, his useful Mercury," Hewitt explained, tapping the cage complacently; "in fact, the actual lifter. Hold him up!"

The last remark referred to the wretched Lloyd, who had fallen forward with something between a sob and a loud sigh. The policemen took him by the arms and propped him in his chair.

"System?" said Hewitt, with a shrug of the shoulders, an hour or two after in Sir James's study. "I can't say I have a system. I call it nothing but common-sense and a sharp pair of eyes. Nobody using these could help taking the right road in this case. I began at the match, just as the Scotland Yard man did, but I had the advantage of taking a line through three cases. To begin with, it was plain that that match, being left there in daylight, in Mrs. Cazenove's room, could not have been used to light the table-top, in the full glare of the window; therefore it had been used for some other purpose—*what* purpose I could not, at the moment, guess. Habitual thieves, you know, often have curious superstitions, and some will never take anything without leaving something behind—a pebble or a piece of coal, or something like that—in the premises they have been robbing. It seemed at first extremely likely that this was a case of that kind. The match had clearly been *brought in*—because, when I asked for matches, there were none in the stand, not even an empty box, and the room had not been disturbed. Also the

match probably had not been struck there, nothing having been heard, although, of course, a mistake in this matter was just possible. This match, then, it was fair to assume, had been lit somewhere else and blown out immediately—I remarked at the time that it was very little burned. Plainly it could not have been treated thus for nothing, and the only possible object would have been to prevent it igniting accidentally. Following on this, it became obvious that the match was used, for whatever purpose, not *as* a match, but merely as a convenient splinter of wood.

"So far so good. But on examining the match very closely I observed, as you can see for yourself, certain rather sharp indentations in the wood. They are very small, you see, and scarcely visible, except upon narrow inspection; but there they are, and their positions are regular. See—there are two on each side, each opposite the corresponding mark of the other pair. The match, in fact, would seem to have been gripped in some fairly sharp instrument, holding it at two points above and two below—an instrument, as it may at once strike you, not unlike the beak of a bird.

"Now here was an idea. What living creature but a bird could possibly have entered Mrs. Heath's window without a ladder—supposing no ladder to have been used—or could have got into Mrs. Armitage's window without lifting the sash higher than the eight or ten inches it was already open? Plainly, nothing. Further, it is significant that only *one* article was stolen at a time, although others were about. A human being could have carried any reasonable number, but a bird could only take one at a time. But why should a bird carry a match in its beak? Certainly it must have been trained to do that for a purpose, and a little consideration made that purpose pretty clear. A noisy, chattering bird would probably betray itself at once. Therefore it must be trained to keep quiet both while going for and coming away with its plunder. What readier or more probably effectual way then, while teaching it to carry without dropping, to teach it also to keep quiet while carrying? The one thing would practically cover the other.

"I thought at once, of course, of a jackdaw or a magpie—these birds' thievish reputations made the guess natural. But the marks on the match were much too wide apart to have been made by the beak of either. I conjectured, therefore, that it must be a raven. So that, when we arrived near the coach-house, I seized the opportunity of a little chat with your groom

on the subject of dogs and pets in general, and ascertained that there was no tame raven in the place. I also, incidentally, by getting a light from the coach-house box of matches, ascertained that the match found was of the sort generally used about the establishment—the large, thick, red-topped English match. But I further found that Mr. Lloyd had a parrot which was a most intelligent pet, and had been trained into comparative quietness —for a parrot. Also, I learned that more than once the groom had met Mr. Lloyd carrying his parrot under his coat, it having, as its owner explained, learned the trick of opening its cage-door and escaping.

"I said nothing, of course, to you of all this, because I had as yet nothing but a train of argument and no results. I got to Lloyd's rooms as soon as possible. My chief object in going there was achieved when I played with the parrot, and induced it to bite a quill tooth-pick.

"When you left me in the smoking-room, I compared the quill and the match very carefully, and found that the marks corresponded exactly. After this I felt very little doubt indeed. The fact of Lloyd having met the ladies walking before dark on the day of the first robbery proved nothing, because, since it was clear that the match had *not* been used to procure a light, the robbery might as easily have taken place in daylight as not—must have so taken place, in fact, if my conjectures were right. That they were right I felt no doubt. There could be no other explanation.

"When Mrs. Heath left her window open and her door shut, anybody climbing upon the open sash of Lloyd's high window could have put the bird upon the sill above. The match placed in the bird's beak for the purpose I have indicated, and struck first, in case by accident it should ignite by rubbing against something and startle the bird—this match would, of course, be dropped just where the object to be removed was taken up; as you know, in every case the match was found almost upon the spot where the missing article had been left—scarcely a likely triple coincidence had the match been used by a human thief. This would have been done as soon after the ladies had left as possible, and there would then have been plenty of time for Lloyd to hurry out and meet them before dark—especially plenty of time to meet them *coming back*, as they must have been, since they were carrying their ferns. The match was an article well chosen for its purpose, as being a not altogether unlikely thing

to find on a dressing-table, and, if noticed, likely to lead to the wrong conclusions adopted by the official detective.

"In Mrs. Armitage's case the taking of an inferior brooch and the leaving of a more valuable ring pointed clearly either to the operator being a fool or unable to distinguish values, and certainly, from other indications, the thief seemed no fool. The door was locked, and the gas-fitter, so to speak, on guard, and the window was only eight or ten inches open and propped with a brush. A human thief entering the window would have disturbed this arrangement, and would scarcely risk discovery by attempting to replace it, especially a thief in so great a hurry as to snatch the brooch up without unfastening the pin. The bird could pass through the opening as it was, and *would have* to tear the pin-cushion to pull the brooch off, probably holding the cushion down with its claw the while.

"Now in yesterday's case we had an alteration of conditions. The window was shut and fastened, but the door was open—but only left for a few minutes, during which time no sound was heard either of coming or going. Was it not possible, then, that the thief was *already* in the room, in hiding, while Mrs. Cazenove was there, and seized its first opportunity on her temporary absence? The room is full of draperies, hangings, and what-not, allowing of plenty of concealment for a bird, and a bird could leave the place noiselessly and quickly. That the whole scheme was strange mattered not at all. Robberies presenting such unaccountable features must have been effected by strange means of one sort or another. There was no improbability—consider how many hundreds of examples of infinitely higher degrees of bird-training are exhibited in the London streets every week for coppers.

"So that, on the whole, I felt pretty sure of my ground. But before taking any definite steps I resolved to see if Polly could not be persuaded to exhibit his accomplishments to an indulgent stranger. For that purpose I contrived to send Lloyd away again and have a quiet hour alone with his bird. A piece of sugar, as everybody knows, is a good parrot bribe; but a walnut, split in half, is a better—especially if the bird be used to it; so I got you to furnish me with both. Polly was shy at first, but I generally get along very well with pets, and a little perseverance soon led to a complete private performance for my benefit. Polly would take the match, mute as wax, jump on the table, pick up the brightest thing he could see, in a great hurry, leave the match

behind, and scuttle away round the room; but at first wouldn't give up the plunder to *me*. It was enough. I also took the liberty, as you know, of a general look round, and discovered that little collection of Brummagem rings and trinkets that you have just seen—used in Polly's education, no doubt. When we sent Lloyd away, it struck me that he might as well be usefully employed as not, so I got him to fetch the police, deluding him a little, I fear, by talking about the servants and a female searcher. There will be no trouble about evidence; he'll confess: of that I'm sure. I know the sort of man. But I doubt if you'll get Mrs. Cazenove's brooch back. You see, he has been to London to-day, and by this the swag is probably broken up."

Sir James listened to Hewitt's explanation with many expressions of assent and some of surprise. When it was over, he smoked a few whiffs and then said: "But Mrs. Armitage's brooch was pawned, and by a woman."

"Exactly. I expect our friend Lloyd was rather disgusted at his small luck—probably gave the brooch to some female connection in London, and she realized on it. Such persons don't always trouble to give a correct address."

The two smoked in silence for a few minutes, and then Hewitt continued: "I don't expect our friend has had an easy job altogether with that bird. His successes at most have only been three, and I suspect he had many failures and not a few anxious moments that we know nothing of. I should judge as much merely from what the groom told me of frequently meeting Lloyd with his parrot. But the plan was not a bad one—not at all. Even if the bird had been caught in the act, it would only have been 'That mischievous parrot!' you see. And his master would only have been looking for him."

THE PATHOLOGIST TO THE RESCUE

R. Austin Freeman *was born in London on November 26, 1862. He was educated at private schools, and began his professional training at the Middlesex Hospital Medical College. In 1886 he was admitted a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries. In 1887 he went to Accra, on the West Coast of Africa, to take up an appointment as Assistant Colonial Surgeon. In 1888 he was attached to a mission to Ashanti and Jaman as medical officer, naturalist and surveyor. He contracted blackwater fever, and was invalided home in 1892. For five years he practised medicine in England, and at one time was Deputy Medical Officer of Holloway Prison. Dr. Freeman is also a landscape and marine painter, a sculptor, a plaster moulder, a worker in wood and metal, and a book-binder.*

His twenty-odd novels fall into two classes—adventure romances and detective stories. The first class includes "The Golden Pool" and "The Unwilling Adventurer." His detective novels—the vehicles for his Dr. John Thorndyke, barrister-at-law and medico-legal expert—include "John Thorndyke's Cases," "The Silent Witness," "The Eye of Osiris" (published in America under the title of "The Vanishing Man"), "The Cat's Eye," "Dr. Thorndyke's Case-Book" ("The Blue Scarab" in the American edition), "The Mystery of 31 New Inn," "The Red Thumb Mark," "The Mystery of Angeline Frood," "The Shadow of the Wolf," "The Puzzle Lock," "The Singing Bone," "The D'Arblay Mystery," and "The Magic Casket."

"The Pathologist to the Rescue," the short story reprinted here, is taken from "The Magic Casket," and reveals the out-of-the-way scientific knowledge with which Dr. Freeman endows his Dr. Thorndyke in the solving of his problems.

THE PATHOLOGIST TO THE RESCUE

By R. Austin Freeman

"I hope," said I, as I looked anxiously out of our window up King's Bench Walk, "that our friend, Foxley, will turn up to time, or I shall lose the chance of hearing his story. I must be in court by half-past eleven. The telegram said that he was a parson, didn't it?"

"Yes," replied Thorndyke. "The Reverend Arthur Foxley."

"Then perhaps this may be he. There is a parson crossing from the Row in this direction, only he has a girl with him. He didn't say anything about a girl, did he?"

"No. He merely asked for the appointment. However," he added, as he joined me at the window and watched the couple approaching with their eyes apparently fixed on the number above our portico, "this is evidently our client, and punctual to the minute."

In response to the old-fashioned flourish on our little knocker, he opened the inner door and invited the clergyman and his companion to enter; and while the mutual introductions were in progress, I looked critically at our new clients. Mr. Foxley was a typical and favorable specimen of his class: a handsome, refined, elderly gentleman, prim as to his speech, suave and courteous in bearing, with a certain engaging simplicity of manner which impressed me very favorably. His companion I judged to be a parishioner, for she was what ladies are apt to describe as "not quite"; that is to say, her social level appeared to appertain to the lower strata of the middle-class. But she was a fine, strapping girl, very sweet-faced and winsome, quiet and gentle in manner and obviously in deep trouble, for her clear gray eyes—fixed earnestly, almost devouringly, on Thorndyke—were reddened and swimming with unshed tears.

"We have sought your aid, Dr. Thorndyke," the clergyman began, "on the advice of my friend, Mr. Brodribb, who happened to call on me on some legal business. He assured me that

you would be able to solve our difficulties if it were humanly possible, so I have come to lay those difficulties before you. I pray to God that you may be able to help us, for my poor young friend here, Miss Markham, is in a most terrible position, as you will understand when I tell you that her future husband, a most admirable young man named Robert Fletcher, is in the custody of the police on a charge of murder."

Thorndyke nodded gravely, and the clergyman continued:

"I had better tell you exactly what has happened. The dead man is one Joseph Riggs, a maternal uncle of Fletcher's, a strange, eccentric man, solitary, miserly, and of a violent, implacable temper. He was quite well-to-do, though penurious and haunted constantly by an absurd fear of poverty. His nephew, Robert, was apparently his only known relative, and, under his will, was his sole heir. Recently, however, Robert has become engaged to my friend, Miss Lilian, and this engagement was violently opposed by his uncle, who had repeatedly urged him to make, what he called a profitable marriage. For Miss Lilian is a dowerless maiden—dowerless save for those endowments with which God has been pleased to enrich her, and which her future husband has properly prized above mere material wealth. However, Riggs, declared, in his brutal way, that he was not going to leave his property to the husband of a shop-woman, and that Robert might look out for a wife with money or be struck out of his will.

"The climax was reached yesterday when Robert, in response to a peremptory summons, went to see his uncle. Mr. Riggs was in a very intractable mood. He demanded that Robert should break off his engagement unconditionally and at once, and when Robert bluntly insisted on his right to choose his own wife the old man worked himself up into a furious rage, shouting, cursing, using the most offensive language and even uttering threats of personal violence. Finally, he drew his gold watch from his pocket and laid it with its chain on the table; then, opening a drawer, he took out a bundle of bearer bonds and threw them down by the watch.

"'There, my friend,' said he, 'that is your inheritance. That is all you will get from me, living or dead. Take it and go, and don't let me ever set eyes on you again.'

"At first Robert refused to accept the gift, but his uncle became so violent that eventually, for peace's sake, he took the watch and the bonds, intending to return them later, and went

away. He left at half-past five, leaving his uncle alone in the house."

"How was that?" Thorndyke asked. "Was there no servant?"

"Mr. Riggs kept no resident servant. The young woman who did his housework came at half-past eight in the morning and left at half-past four. Yesterday she waited until five to get tea ready, but then, as the uproar in the sitting-room was still unabated, she thought it best to go. She was afraid to go in to lay the tea-things.

"This morning, when she arrived at the house, she found the front door unlocked, as it always was during the day. On entering, her attention was at once attracted by two or three little pools of blood on the floor of the hall, or passage. Somewhat alarmed by this, she looked into the sitting-room, and finding no one there, and being impressed by the silence in the house, she went along the passage to a back room—a sort of study or office, which was usually kept locked when Mr. Riggs was not in it. Now, however, it was unlocked and the door was ajar; so having first knocked and receiving no answer, she pushed open the door and looked in; and there, to her horror, she saw her employer lying on the floor, apparently dead, with a wound on the side of his head and a pistol on the floor by his side.

"Instantly she turned and rushed out of the house, and she was running up the street in search of a policeman when she encountered me at a corner and burst out with her dreadful tidings. I walked with her to the police station, and as we went she told me what had happened on the previous afternoon. Naturally, I was profoundly shocked and also alarmed, for I saw that—rightly or wrongly—suspicion must immediately fall on Robert Fletcher. The servant, Rose Turnmill, took it for granted that he had murdered her master; and when we found the station inspector and Rose had repeated her statement to him, it was evident that he took the same view.

"With him and a sergeant, we went back to the house; but on the way we met Mr. Brodribb, who was staying at the 'White Lion' and had just come out for a walk. I told him, rapidly, what had occurred and begged him to come with us, which, with the inspector's consent, he did; and as we walked I explained to him the awful position that Robert Fletcher might be placed in, and asked him to advise me what to do. But, of course, there

was nothing to be said or done until we had seen the body and knew whether any suspicion rested on Robert.

"We found the man Riggs lying, as Rose had said. He was quite dead, cold and stiff. There was a pistol wound on the right temple, and a pistol lay on the floor at his right side. A little blood—but not much—had trickled from the wound and lay in a small pool on the oil-cloth. The door of an iron safe was open and a bunch of keys hung from the lock; and on a desk one or two share certificates were spread out. On searching the dead man's pockets it was found that the gold watch which the servant told us he usually carried was missing, and when Rose went to the bedroom to see if it was there, it was nowhere to be found.

"Apart from the watch, however, the appearances suggested that the man had taken his own life. But against this view was the blood on the hall floor. The dead man appeared to have fallen at once from the effects of the shot, and there had been very little bleeding. Then how came the blood in the hall? The inspector decided that it could not have been the blood of the deceased; and when we examined it and saw that there were several little pools and that they seemed to form a track towards the street door, he was convinced that the blood had fallen from some person who had been wounded and was escaping from the house. And, under the circumstances, he was bound to assume that that person was Robert Fletcher; and on that assumption, he despatched the sergeant forthwith to arrest Robert.

"On this I held a consultation with Mr. Brodribb, who pointed out that the case turned principally on the blood in the hall. If it was the blood of deceased, and the absence of the watch could be explained, a verdict of suicide could be accepted. But if it was the blood of some other person, that fact would point to murder. The question, he said, would have to be settled, if possible, and his advice to me, if I believed Robert to be innocent—which, from my knowledge of him, I certainly did—was this: Get a couple of small, clean, labeled bottles from a chemist and—with the inspector's consent—put in one a little of the blood from the hall and in the other some of the blood of the deceased. Seal them both in the inspector's presence and mine and take them up to Dr. Thorndyke. If it is possible to answer the question, Are they or are they not from the same person? he will answer it.

"Well, the inspector made no objection, so I did what he

advised. And here are the specimens. I trust they may tell us what we want to know."

Here Mr. Foxley took from his attaché-case a small cardboard box, and opening it, displayed two little wide-mouthed bottles carefully packed in cotton wool. Lifting them out tenderly, he placed them on the table before Thorndyke. They were both neatly corked, sealed—with Brodribb's seal, as I noticed—and labeled; the one inscribed "Blood of Joseph Riggs," and the other "Blood of unknown origin," and both signed "Arthur Foxley" and dated. At the bottom of each was a small mass of gelatinous blood-clot.

Thorndyke looked a little dubiously at the two bottles, and addressing the clergyman, said:

"I am afraid Mr. Brodribb has rather over-estimated our resources. There is no known method by which the blood of one person can be distinguished with certainty from that of another."

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Mr. Foxley. "How disappointing! Then these specimens are useless, after all?"

"I won't say that; but it is in the highest degree improbable that they will yield any information. You must build no expectations on them."

"But you will examine them and see if anything is to be gleaned," the parson urged, persuasively.

"Yes, I will examine them. But you realize that if they should yield any evidence, that evidence might be unfavorable?"

"Yes; Mr. Brodribb pointed that out, but we are willing to take the risk, and so, I may say, is Robert Fletcher, to whom I put the question."

"Then you have seen Mr. Fletcher since the discovery?"

"Yes, I saw him at the police station after his arrest. It was then that he gave me—and also the police—the particulars that I have repeated to you. He had to make a statement, as the dead man's watch and the bonds were found in his possession."

"With regard to the pistol. Has it been identified?"

"No. It is an old-fashioned derringer which no one has ever seen before, so there is no evidence as to whose property it was."

"And as to those share certificates which you spoke of as lying on the desk. Do you happen to remember what they were?"

"Yes, they were West African mining shares; Abusum Pa-pa was the name, I think."

"Then," said Thorndyke, "Mr. Riggs had been losing money.

The Abusum Pa-pa Company has just gone into liquidation. Do you know if anything had been taken from the safe?"

"It is impossible to say, but apparently not, as there was a good deal of money in the cash-box, which we unlocked and inspected. But we shall hear more to-morrow at the inquest, and I trust we shall hear something there from you. But in any case I hope you will attend to watch the proceedings on behalf of poor Fletcher. And if possible, to be present at the autopsy at eleven o'clock. Can you manage that?"

"Yes. And I shall come down early enough to make an inspection of the premises if the police will give the necessary facilities."

Mr. Foxley thanked him effusively, and when the details as to the trains had been arranged, our clients rose to depart. Thorndyke shook their hands cordially, and as he bade farewell to Miss Markham he murmured a few words of encouragement. She looked up at him gratefully and appealingly as she naïvely held his hand.

"You will try to help us, Dr. Thorndyke, won't you?" she urged. "And you will examine that blood very, very carefully. Promise that you will. Remember that poor Robert's life may hang upon what you can tell about it."

"I realize that, Miss Markham," he replied gently, "and I promise you that the specimens shall be most thoroughly examined; and further, that no stone shall be left unturned in my endeavors to bring the truth to light."

At his answer, spoken with infinite kindliness and sympathy, her eyes filled and she turned away with a few broken words of thanks, and the good clergyman—himself not unmoved by the little episode—took her arm and led her to the door.

"Well," I remarked as their retreating footsteps died away, "old Brodribb's enthusiasm seems to have let you in for a queer sort of task; and I notice that you appear to have accepted Fletcher's statement."

"Without prejudice," he replied. "I don't know Fletcher, but the balance of probabilities is in his favor. Still, that blood-track in the hall is a curious feature. It certainly requires explanation."

"It does, indeed!" I exclaimed, "and you have got to find the explanation! Well, I wish you joy of the job. I suppose you will carry out the farce to the bitter end as you have promised?"

"Certainly," he replied. "But it is hardly a farce. I should have looked the specimens over in any case. One never knows what illuminating fact a chance observation may bring into view."

I smiled skeptically.

"The fact that you are asked to ascertain is that these two samples of blood came from the same person. If there are any means of proving that, they are unknown to me. I should have said it was an impossibility."

"Of course," he rejoined, "you are quite right, speaking academically and in general terms. No method of identifying the blood of individual persons has hitherto been discovered. But yet I can imagine the possibility, in particular and exceptional cases, of an actual, personal identification by means of blood. What does my learned friend think?"

"He thinks that his imagination is not equal to the required effort," I answered; and with that I picked up my brief-bag and went forth to my duties at the courts.

That Thorndyke would keep his promise to poor Lilian Markham was a foregone conclusion, preposterous as the examination seemed. But even my long experience of my colleague's scrupulous conscientiousness had not prepared me for the spectacle which met my eyes when I returned to our chambers. On the table stood the microscope, flanked by three slide-boxes. Each box held six trays, and each tray held six slides—a hundred and eight slides in all!

But why three boxes? I opened one. The slides—carefully mounted blood-films—were labeled "Joseph Riggs." Those in the second box were labeled, "Blood from hall floor." But when I opened the third box, I beheld a collection of empty slides labeled "Robert Fletcher!"

I chuckled aloud. Prodigious! Thorndyke was going even one better than his promise. He was not only going to examine —probably had examined—the two samples produced; he was actually going to collect a third sample for himself!

I picked out one of Mr. Riggs's slides and laid it on the stage of the microscope. Thorndyke seemed to have been using a low-power objective—the inch-and-a-half. After a glance through this, I swung round the nose-piece to the high power. And then I got a further surprise. The brightly-colored "white" corpuscles showed that Thorndyke had actually been to the trouble of staining the films with eosin! Again I murmured, "Pro-

digious!" and put the slide back in its box. For, of course, it showed just what one expected: blood—or rather, broken-up blood-clot. From its appearance, I could not even have sworn that it was human blood.

I had just closed the box when Thorndyke entered the room. His quick eye at once noted the changed objective and he remarked:

"I see you have been having a look at the specimens."

"A specimen," I corrected. "Enough is as good as a feast."

"Blessed are they who are easily satisfied," he retorted; and then he added: "I have altered my arrangements, though I needn't interfere with yours. I shall go down to Southaven to-night; in fact, I am starting in a few minutes."

"Why?" I asked.

"For several reasons. I want to make sure of the post-mortem to-morrow morning, I want to pick up any further facts that are available, and finally, I want to prepare a set of blood-films from Robert Fletcher. We may as well make the series complete," he added with a smile, to which I replied by a broad grin.

"Really, Thorndyke," I protested, "I'm surprised at you, at your age, too. She is a nice girl, but she isn't so beautiful as to justify a hundred and eight blood-films."

I accompanied him to the taxi, followed by Polton, who carried his modest luggage, and then returned to speculate on his probable plan of campaign. For, of course, he had one. His purposive, resolute manner told me that he had seen farther into this case than I had. I accepted that as natural and inevitable. Indeed, I may admit that my disrespectful badinage covered a belief in his powers hardly second even to old Brodribb's. I was, in fact, almost prepared to discover that those preposterous blood-films, after all, yielded some "illuminating fact" which had sent him hurrying down to Southaven in search of corroboration.

When I alighted from the train, on the following day at a little past noon, I found him waiting on the platform, ready to conduct me to his hotel for an early lunch.

"All goes well, so far," he reported. "I attended the post-mortem, and examined the wound thoroughly. The pistol was held in the right hand not more than two inches from the head; probably quite close, for the skin is scorched and heavily tattooed

with black powder grains. I find that Riggs was right-handed. So the *prima facie* probabilities are in favor of suicide; and the recent loss of money suggests a reasonable motive."

"But what about that blood in the hall?"

"Oh, we have disposed of that. I completed the blood-films series last night."

I looked at him quickly to see if he was serious or only playing a facetious return-shot. But his face was as a face of wood.

"You are an exasperating old devil, Thorndyke!" I exclaimed with conviction. Then, knowing that cross-examination would be futile, I asked:

"What are we going to do after lunch?"

"The inspector is going to show us over 'the scene of the tragedy,' as the newspapers would express it."

I noted gratefully that he had reserved this item for me, and dismissed professional topics for the time being, concentrating my attention on the old-world, amphibious streets through which we were walking. There is always something interesting in the aspect of a seaport town, even if it is only a small one like Southaven.

The inspector arrived with such punctuality that he found us still at the table and was easily induced to join us with a cup of coffee and to accept a cigar—administered by Thorndyke, as I suspected, with the object of hindering conversation. I could see that his interest in my colleague was intense and not unmingled with awe, a fact which, in conjunction with the cigar, restrained him from any undue manifestations of curiosity, but not from continuous, though furtive, observation of my friend. Indeed, when we arrived at the late Mr. Riggs's house, I was secretly amused by the close watch that he kept on Thorndyke's movements, unsensational as the inspection turned out to be.

The house, itself, presented very little of interest excepting its picturesque, old-world exterior, which fronted on a quiet by-street and was furnished with a deep bay-window, which—as Thorndyke ascertained—commanded a clear view of the street from end to end. It was a rather shabby, neglected little house, as might have been expected, and our examination of it yielded, so far as I could see, only a single fact of any significance: which was that there appeared to be no connection whatever between the blood-stain on the study floor and the train of large spots from the middle of the hall to the street door. And on this piece of evidence—definitely unfavorable from our point of

view—Thorndyke concentrated his attention when he had made a preliminary survey.

Closely followed by the watchful inspector, he browsed round the little room, studying every inch of the floor between the blood-stain and the door. The latter he examined minutely from top to bottom, especially as to the handle, the jambs, and the lintel. Then he went out into the hall, scrutinizing the floor inch by inch, poring over the walls and even looking behind the framed prints that hung on them. A reflector lamp suspended by a nail on the wall received minute and prolonged attention, as did also a massive lamp-hook screwed into one of the beams of the low ceiling, of which Thorndyke remarked as he stopped to pass under it, that it must have been fixed there by a dwarf.

"Yes," the inspector agreed, "and a fool. A swinging lamp hung on that hook would have blocked the whole fairway. There isn't too much room as it is. What a pity we weren't a bit more careful about footprints in this place. There are plenty of tracks of wet feet here on this oil-cloth; faint, but you could have made them out all right if they hadn't been all on top of one another. There's Mr. Foxley's, the girl's, mine, and the men who carried out the body, but I'm hanged if I can tell which is which. It's a regular mix-up."

"Yes," I agreed, "it is all very confused. But I notice one rather odd thing. There are several faint traces of a large right foot, but I can't see any sign of the corresponding left foot. Can you?"

"Perhaps this is it," said Thorndyke, pointing to a large, vague oval mark. "I have noticed that it seems to occur in some sort of connection with the big right foot; but I must admit that it is not a very obvious footprint."

"I shouldn't have taken it for a footprint at all, or at any rate, not a human footprint. It is more like the spoor of some big animal."

"It is," Thorndyke agreed; "but whatever it is, it seems to have been here before any of the others arrived. You notice that wherever it occurs, it seems to have been trodden on by some of the others."

"Yes, I had noticed that, and the same is true of the big right foot, so it seems probable that they are connected, as you say. But I am hanged if I can make anything of it. Can you, inspector?"

The inspector shook his head. He could not recognize the

mark as a footprint, but he could see very plainly that he had been a fool not to have taken more care to protect the floor.

When the examination of the hall was finished, Thorndyke opened the door and looked at the big, flat doorstep.

"What was the weather like, here, on Wednesday evening?" he asked.

"Showery," the inspector replied; "and there were one or two heavy showers during the night. You were noticing that there are no blood-tracks on the doorstep. But there wouldn't be in any case; for if a man had come out of this door dropping blood, the blood would have dropped on wet stone and got washed away at once."

Thorndyke admitted the truth of this; and so another item of favorable evidence was extinguished. The overwhelming probability that the blood in the hall was that of some person other than the deceased remained undisturbed; and I could not see that a single fact had been elicited by our inspection of the house that was in any way helpful to our client. Indeed, it appeared to me that there was absolutely no case for the defense, and I even asked myself whether we were not, in fact, merely trying to fudge up a defense for an obviously guilty man. It was not like Thorndyke to do that. But how did the case stand? There was a suggestion of suicide, but a clear possibility of homicide. There was strong evidence that a second person had been in the house, and that person appeared to have received a wound. But a wound suggested a struggle; and the servant's evidence was to the effect that when she left the house a violent altercation was in progress. The deceased was never again seen alive; and the other party to the quarrel had been found with property of the dead man in his possession. Moreover, there was a clear motive for the crime, stupid as that crime was. For the dead man had threatened to revoke his will; but as he had presumably not done so, his death left the will still operative. In short, everything pointed to the guilt of our client, Robert Fletcher.

I had just reached this not very gratifying conclusion when a statement of Thorndyke's shattered my elaborate summing up into impalpable fragments.

"I suppose, sir," said the inspector, "there isn't anything that you would care to tell us, as you are for the defense. But we are not hostile to Fletcher. In fact, he hasn't been charged. He is only being detained in custody until we have heard what

turns up at the inquest. I know you have examined that blood that Mr. Foxley took, and Fletcher's blood, too, and you've seen the premises. We have given all the facilities that we could, and if you could give us any sort of hint that might be useful—well, I should be very much obliged."

Thorndyke reflected for a few moments. Then he replied:

"There is no reason for secrecy in regard to you, inspector, who have been so helpful and friendly, so I will be quite frank. I have examined both samples of blood and Fletcher's, and I have inspected the premises, and what I am able to say definitely is this: the blood in the hall is not the blood of the deceased——"

"Ah!" exclaimed the inspector, "I was afraid it wasn't."

"And it is not the blood of Robert Fletcher."

"Isn't it now! Well, I am glad to hear that."

"Moreover," continued Thorndyke, "it was shed well after nine o'clock at night, probably not earlier than midnight."

"There, now!" the inspector exclaimed, with an admiring glance at Thorndyke, "just think of that. See what it is to be a man of science! I suppose, sir, you couldn't give us any sort of description of the person who dropped that blood in the hall?"

Staggered as I had been by Thorndyke's astonishing statements, I could not repress a grin at the inspector's artless question. But the grin faded rather abruptly as Thorndyke replied in matter-of-fact tones:

"A detailed description is, of course, impossible. I can only sketch out the probabilities. But if you should happen to meet with a negro—a tall negro with a bandaged head or a contused wound of the scalp and a swollen leg—you had better keep your eye on him. The leg which is swollen is probably the left."

The inspector was thrilled; and so was I, for that matter. The thing was incredible; but yet I knew that Thorndyke's amazing deductions were the products of perfectly orthodox scientific methods. Only I could form no sort of guess as to how they had been arrived at. A negro's blood is no different from any other person's, and certainly affords no clue to his height or the condition of his legs. I could make nothing of it; and as the dialogue and the inspector's note-takings brought us to the little town hall in which the inquest was to be held, I dismissed the puzzle until such time as Thorndyke chose to solve it.

When we entered the town hall we found everything in

readiness for the opening of the proceedings. The jury were already in their places and the coroner was just about to take his seat at the head of the long table. We accordingly slipped on to the two chairs that were found for us by the inspector, and the latter took his place behind the jury and facing us. Near to him Mr. Foxley and Miss Markham were seated, and evidently hailed our arrival with profound relief, each of them smiling us a silent greeting. A professional-looking man sitting next to Thorndyke I assumed to be the medical witness, and a rather good-looking young man who sat apart with a police constable I identified as Robert Fletcher.

The evidence of the "common" witnesses who deposed to the general facts, told us nothing that we did not already know, excepting that it was made clear that Fletcher had left his uncle's house not later than seven o'clock and that thereafter until the following morning his whereabouts were known. The medical witness was cautious, and kept an uneasy eye on Thorndyke. The wound which caused the death of deceased might have been inflicted by himself or by some other person. He had originally given the probable time of death as six or seven o'clock on Wednesday evening. He now admitted—in reply to a question from Thorndyke—that he had not taken the temperature of the body, and that the rigidity and other conditions were not absolutely inconsistent with a considerably later time of death. Death might even have occurred after midnight.

In spite of this admission, however, the sum of the evidence tended strongly to implicate Fletcher, and one or two questions from jurymen suggested a growing belief in his guilt. I had no doubt whatever that if the case had been put to the jury at this stage, a unanimous verdict of "wilful murder" would have been the result. But, as the medical witness returned to his seat, the coroner fixed an inquisitive eye on Thorndyke.

"You have not been summoned as a witness, Dr. Thorndyke," said he, "but I understand that you have made certain investigations in this case. Are you able to throw any fresh light on the circumstances of the death of the deceased, Joseph Riggs?"

"Yes," Thorndyke replied. "I am in a position to give important and material evidence!"

Thereupon he was sworn, and the coroner, still watching him curiously, said:

"I am informed that you have examined samples of the blood of deceased and the blood which was found in the hall of de-

ceased's house. Did you examine them, and if so, what was the object of the examination?"

"I examined both samples and also samples of the blood of Robert Fletcher. The object was to ascertain whether the blood on the hall floor was the blood of the deceased or of Robert Fletcher."

The coroner glanced at the medical witness, and a faint smile appeared on the face of each.

"And did you," the former asked in a slightly ironical tone, "form any opinion on the subject?"

"I ascertained definitely that the blood in the hall was neither that of the deceased nor that of Robert Fletcher."

The coroner's eyebrows went up, and once more he glanced significantly at the doctor.

"But," he demanded incredulously, "is it possible to distinguish the blood of one person from that on another?"

"Usually it is not but in certain exceptional cases, it is. This happened to be an exceptional case."

"In what respect?"

"It happened," Thorndyke replied, "that the person whose blood was found in the hall suffered from the parasitic disease known as filariasis. His blood was infested with swarms of a minute worm named *Filaria nocturna*. I have here," he continued, taking out of his research-case the two bottles and the three boxes, "thirty-six mounted specimens of this blood, and in everyone of them one or more of the parasites is to be seen. I have also thirty-six mounted specimens each of the blood of the deceased and the blood of Robert Fletcher. In not one of these specimens is a single parasite to be found. Moreover, I have examined Robert Fletcher and the body of the deceased, and can testify that no sign of filarial disease was to be discovered in either. Hence it is certain that the blood found in the hall was not the blood of either of these two persons."

The ironic smile had faded from the coroner's face. He was evidently deeply impressed, and his manner was quite deferential as he asked:

"Do these very remarkable observations of yours lead to any further inferences?"

"Yes," replied Thorndyke. "They render it certain that this blood was shed not earlier than nine o'clock and probably nearer midnight."

"Really!" the astonished coroner exclaimed. "Now, how is it possible to fix the time in that exact manner?"

"By inference from the habits of the parasite," Thorndyke explained. "This particular filaria is distributed by the mosquito, and its habits are adapted to the habits of the mosquito. During the day, the worms are not found in the blood; they remain hidden in the tissues of the body. But about nine o'clock at night they begin to migrate from the tissues into the blood, and remain in the blood during the hours when the mosquitoes are active. Then, about six o'clock in the morning, they leave the blood and migrate back into the tissues.

"There is another very similar species—*Filaria diurna*—which has exactly opposite habits, adapted to day-flying suctorial insects. It appears in the blood about eleven in the forenoon and goes back into the tissues about six o'clock in the evening."

"Astonishing!" exclaimed the coroner. "Wonderful! By the way, the parasites that you found could not, I suppose, have been *Filaria diurna?*"

"No," Thorndyke replied. "The time excludes that possibility. The blood was certainly shed after six. They were undoubtedly *nocturna*, and the large numbers found suggest a late hour. The parasites come out of the tissues very gradually, and it is only about midnight that they appear in the blood in really large numbers."

"That is very important," said the coroner. "But does this disease affect any particular class of persons?"

"Yes," Thorndyke replied. "As the disease is confined to tropical countries, the sufferers are naturally residents of the tropics, and nearly always natives. In West Africa, for instance, it is common among the negroes but practically unknown among the white residents."

"Should you say that there is a distinct probability that this unknown person was a negro?"

"Yes. But apart from the filariæ, there is direct evidence that he was. Searching for some cause of the bleeding, I noticed a lamphook screwed into the ceiling and low enough to strike a tall man's head. I examined it closely, and observed on it a dark, shiny mark, like a blood-smear, and one or two short coiled hairs which I recognized as the scalp-hairs of a negro. I have no doubt that the unknown man is a negro, and that he has a wound of the scalp."

"Does filarial disease produce any effects that can be recognized?"

"Frequently it does. One of the commonest effects produced by *Filaria nocturna,* especially among negroes, is the condition known as elephantiasis. This consists of an enormous swelling of the extremities, most usually of one leg, including the foot; whence the name. The leg and foot look like those of an elephant. As a matter of fact, the negro who was in the hall suffered from elephantiasis of the left leg. I observed prints of the characteristically deformed foot on the oil-cloth covering the floor."

Thorndyke's evidence was listened to with intense interest by everyone present, including myself. Indeed, so spell-bound was his audience that one could have heard a pin drop; and the breathless silence continued for some seconds after he had ceased speaking. Then, in the midst of the stillness, I heard the door creak softly behind me.

There was nothing particularly significant in the sound. But its effects were amazing. Glancing at the inspector, who faced the door, I saw his eyes open and his jaw drop until his face was a very mask of astonishment. And as this expression was reflected on the faces of the jurymen, the coroner and everyone present, excepting Thorndyke, whose back was towards the door, I turned to see what had happened. And then I was as astonished as the others.

The door had been pushed open a few inches and a head thrust in—a negro's head, covered with a soiled and blood-stained rag forming a rough bandage. As I gazed at the black, shiny, inquisitive face, the man pushed the door farther open and shuffled into the room; and instantly there arose on all sides a soft rustle and an inarticulate murmur followed by breathless silence, while every eye was riveted on the man's left leg.

It certainly was a strange, repulsive-looking member, its monstrous bulk exposed to view through the slit trouser and its great shapeless foot—shoeless, since no shoe could have contained it—rough and horny like the foot of an elephant. But it was tragic and pitiable, too; for the man, apart from this horrible excrescence, was a fine, big, athletic-looking fellow.

The coroner was the first to recover. Addressing Thorndyke, but keeping an eye on the negro, he said:

"Your evidence, then, amounts to this: On the night of Joseph Riggs's death, there was a stranger in the house. That

stranger was a negro, who seems to have wounded his head and who, you say, had a swelled left leg."

"Yes," Thorndyke admitted, "that is the substance of my evidence."

Once more a hush fell on the room. The negro stood near the door, rolling his eyes to and fro over the assembly as if uneasily conscious that everyone was looking at him. Suddenly, he shuffled up to the foot of the table and addressed the coroner in deep, buzzing, resonant tones.

"You tink I kill dat ole man! I no kill um. He kill himself. I look um."

Having made this statement, he rolled his eyes defiantly round the court, and then turned his face expectantly towards the coroner, who said:

"You say you know that Mr. Riggs killed himself?"

"Yas. I look um. He shoot himself. You tink I shoot um. I tell you I no shoot um. Why, I fit kill this man? I no sabby um."

"Then," said the coroner, "if you know that he killed himself, you must tell us all that you know; and you must swear to tell us the truth."

"Yas," the negro agreed, "I tell you eberyting one time. I tell you de troof. Dat ole man kill himself."

When the coroner had explained to him that he was not bound to make any statement that would incriminate him, as he still elected to give evidence, he was sworn and proceeded to make his statement with curious fluency and self-possession.

"My name Robert Bruce. Dat my English name. My country name Kwaku Mensah. I live for Winnebah on de Gold Coast. Dis time I cook's mate for dat steamer *Leckie*. On Wednesday night I lay in my bunk. I no fit sleep. My leg he chook me. I look out of de port-hole. Plenty moon live. In my country when de moon big, peoples walk about. So I get up. I go ashore to walk about de town. Den de rain come. Plenty rain. Rain no good for my sickness. So I try for open house doors. No fit. All doors locked. Den I come to dis ole man's house. I turn de handle. De door open. I go in. I look in one room. All dark. Nobody live. Den I look annudder room. De door open a little. Light live inside. I no like dat. I think, spose somebody come out and see me, he tink I come for teef something. So I tink I go away.

"Den something make 'Ping!' same like gun. I hear some-

ting fall down in dat room. I go to de door and I sing out, 'Who live in dere?' Nobody say nutting. So I open de door and look in. De room full ob smoke. I look dat ole man on de floor. I look dat pistol. I sabby dat ole man kill himself. Den I frighten too much. I run out. De place all dark. Someting knock my head. He make blood come plenty. I go back for ship. I no say nutting to nobody. Dis day I hear peoples talk 'bout dis inquess to find out who kill dat ole man. So I come to hear what peoples say. I hear dat gentleman say I kill dat ole man. So I tell you eberyting. I tell you de troof. Finish."

"Do you know what time it was when you came ashore?" the coroner asked.

"Yas. When I come down de ladder I hear eight bells ring. I get back to de ship jus' before dey ring two bells in the middle watch."

"Then you came ashore at midnight and got back just before one o'clock?"

"Yas. Dat is what I say."

A few more questions put by the coroner having elicited nothing fresh, the case was put briefly to the jury.

"You have heard the evidence, gentlemen, and most remarkable evidence it was. Like myself, you must have been deeply impressed by the amazing skill with which Dr. Thorndyke reconstructed the personality of the unknown visitor to that house, and even indicated correctly the very time of the visit, from an examination of a mere chance blood-stain. As to the statement of Kwaku Mensah, I can only say that I see no reason to doubt its truth. You will note that it is in complete agreement with Dr. Thorndyke's evidence, and it presents no inconsistencies or improbabilities. Possibly the police may wish to make some further inquiries, but for our purposes it is the evidence of an eyewitness, and as such must be given full weight. With these remarks, I leave you to consider your verdict."

The jury took but a minute or two to deliberate. Indeed, only one verdict was possible if the evidence was to be accepted, and that was agreed on unanimously—suicide whilst temporarily insane. As soon as it was announced, the inspector, formally and with congratulations, released Fletcher from custody, and presently retired in company with the negro to make a few inquiries on board the ship.

The rising of the court was the signal for a wild demonstration of enthusiasm and gratitude to Thorndyke. To play his

part efficiently in that scene he would have needed to be furnished, like certain repulsive Indian deities, with an unlimited outfit of arms. For everyone wanted to shake his hand, and two of them—Mr. Foxley and Miss Markham—did so with such pertinacity as entirely to exclude the other candidates.

"I can never thank you enough," Miss Markham exclaimed, with swimming eyes, "if I should live to be a hundred. But I shall think of you with gratitude every day of my life. Whenever I look at Robert, I shall remember that his liberty, and even his life, are your gifts."

Here she was so overcome by grateful emotion that she again seized and pressed his hand. I think she was within a ace of kissing him; but being, perhaps, doubtful how he would take it, compromised by kissing Robert instead. And, no doubt, it was just as well.

THE STRAW MAN

Melville Davisson Post *was born in Harrison County, West Virginia, on April 19, 1871. He was educated at the University of West Virginia, taking his A.B. degree in 1891 and his LL.B. degree a year later. He was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of West Virginia, the United States Supreme Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of the United States. He was a member of the Board of Regents of the State Normal Schools, and a member of the advisory committee of the National Economic League on the question of efficiency in the administration of justice. His three volumes of Randolph Mason stories—"Randolph Mason: The Strange Schemes" (1896), "Randolph Mason: The Clients" (1897), and "Randolph Mason: The Corrector of Destinies" (1899)—are among the best stories of legal mysteries in English, and are to-day justly ranked as American literary classics. The first of these volumes, which included the famous "Corpus Delicti," led to certain reforms in American legal procedure.*

Other books by Mr. Post are "Dwellers in the Hills" (1901), "The Gilded Chair" (1910), "The Nameless Thing" (1912), "Uncle Abner" (1918), "The Mystery of the Blue Villa" (1919), "The Sleuth of St. James's Square" (1920), "The Mountain School Teacher" (1922), "Monsieur Jonquelle" (1923), "Walker of the Secret Service" (1925), and "The Man Hunters" (1926)—this last a work on modern criminological methods as practised by the police of various nations.

"The Straw Man" has been chosen from the volume "Uncle Abner: Master of Mysteries."

THE STRAW MAN

By Melville Davisson Post

It was a day of early June in Virginia. The afternoon sun lay warm on the courthouse with its great plaster pillars; on the tavern with its two-story porch; on the stretches of green fields beyond and the low wooded hill, rimmed by the far-off mountains like a wall of the world.

It was the first day of the circuit court, which all the country attended. And on this afternoon, two men crossed the one thoroughfare that lay through the county seat, and went up the wide stone steps into the courthouse.

The two men were in striking contrast. One, short of stature and beginning to take on the rotundity of age, was dressed with elaborate care, his great black stock propping up his chin, his linen and the cloth of his coat immaculate. He wore a huge carved ring and a bunch of seals attached to his watch-fob. The other was a big, broad-shouldered, deep-chested Saxon, with all those marked characteristics of a race living out of doors and hardened by wind and sun. His powerful frame carried no ounce of surplus weight. It was the frame of the empire builder on the frontier of the empire. The face reminded one of Cromwell, the craggy features in repose seemed molded over iron, but the fine gray eyes had a calm serenity, like remote spaces in the summer sky. The man's clothes were plain and somber. And he gave one the impression of things big and vast.

As the two entered between the plaster pillars, a tall old man came out from the county clerk's office. But for his face, he might have been one of a thousand Englishmen in Virginia. There was nothing in the big, spare figure or the cranial lines of the man to mark.

But the face seized you. In it was an unfathomable disgust with life, joined, one would say, with a cruel courage. The hard, bony jaw protruded; bitter lines descended along the planes of the face, and the eyes circled by red rims were ex-

pressionless and staring, as though, by some abominable negligence of nature, they were lidless.

The two approached, and the one so elaborately dressed spoke to the old man.

"How do you do, Northcote Moore?" he said. "You know Abner?"

The old man stopped instantly and stood very still. He moved the stick in his hand a trifle before him. Then he spoke in a high-pitched, irascible voice.

"Abner, eh! Well, what the devil is Abner here for?"

The little pompous man clenched his fingers in his yellow gloves, but his voice showed no annoyance.

"I asked him to have a look at Eastwood Court."

"Damn the justice of the peace of every county," cried the old man, "and you included, Randolph! You never make an end of anything."

He gave no attention to Abner, who remained unembarrassed, regarding the impolite old man as one regards some strange, new, and particularly offensive beast.

"Chuck the whole business, Randolph, that's what I say," the irascible old man continued, "and forget about it. Who the devil cares? A drooling old paralytic is snuffed out. Well, he ought to have gone five and twenty years ago! He couldn't manage his estate and he kept me out. I was like to hang about until I rotted, while the creature played at Patience, propped up against the table and the wall. A nigger, on a search for shillings, knocks him on the head. Shall I hunt the nigger down and hang him? Damme! I would rather get him a patent of state lands!"

The face of Randolph was a study in expression.

"But, sir," he said, "there are some things about this affair that are peculiar—I may say extraordinarily peculiar."

Again the old man stood still. When he spoke his voice was in a lower note.

"And so," he said, "you have nosed out a new clew and got Abner over, and we are to have another inquisition."

He reflected, moving his stick idly before him. Then he went on in a petulant, persuasive tone.

"Why can't you let sleeping dogs lie? The country is beginning to forget this affair, and you set about to stir it up. Shall I always have the thing clanking at my heels like a ball and chain?"

Then he rang the paved court with the ferrule of his stick.

"Damme, man!" he cried. "Has Virginia no mysteries, that you yap forever on old scents at Eastwood? What does it matter who did this thing? It was a public service. Virginia needs a few men on her lands with a bit of courage. This state is rotten with old timber. In youth, Duncan Moore was a fool. In age, he was better dead. Let there be an end to this, Randolph."

And he turned about and went back into the county clerk's office.

Randolph was a justice of the peace in Virginia. He looked a moment after the departing figure; then he spoke to his companion.

"He is here to have the lands of Duncan Moore transferred on the assessor's books to his own name. He takes the estate under the Life and Lives statute of Virginia, that the legislature got up to soften the rigor of Mr. Jefferson's Statute of Descents. Under it, this estate with its great English manor house was devised by the original ancestor to Duncan Moore for his life, and after him to Northcote Moore for his life, and at his death to Esdale Moore. It could have run twenty-one years farther if the scrivener had known the statute. Mr. Jefferson did not entirely decapitate the law of entail."

He paused and lifted his finger with a curious gesture.

"It is a queer family—I think the very queerest in Virginia. There is something defective about every one of them. Duncan Moore, the decedent, had no children. His two brothers died epileptics. This man, the son of the elder brother, is blind. And the son of the junior, Mr. Esdale Moore, the attorney-at-law——"

The Justice of the Peace was interrupted. A little dapper man, sunburned and bareheaded, dressed like a tailor's print, but with the smart, aggressive air of a well-bred colonial Englishman, pushed through the crowd and clapped the Justice on the shoulder.

"What luck, Randolph?" he cried. "I am sure Abner has run the assassin to cover." And he bobbed his head to Abner like one whose profession permits a certain familiarity. "Come along to the tavern; 'I would listen to your wondrous tales,' as Homer says it."

He led the way, calling out to a member of the bar, hailing

an acquaintance, and hurling banter about him in the bluff, hearty fashion which he imagined to be the correct manner of a man of the people who is getting on. He was in the strength and vigor of his race at forty.

"Beastly dull, Randolph," he rattled; "nothing exciting since the dawn expect old Baron-Vitch's endless suit in chancery. But one must sit tight, rain or shine. The people must know where to find a lawyer when they want him."

He swung along with a big military stride.

"The life of a lawyer is far from jolly. I should like to cut it, Randolph, if I had a good shooting and bit of trout water. Alas, I am poor!" And he made a dramatic gesture.

One felt that under this froth the man was calling out the truth. For all his hearty interest in affairs, the law was merely a sort of game. It was nothing real. He played to win, and he had chosen his profession with care and after long reflection, as a breeder chooses a colt for the Derby, or as an English family of influence selects a crack regiment for the heir at Oxford. He cared not one penny what the laws were or the great policies of Virginia. But he did care, with an inbred and abiding interest, about the value of a partridge shooting, or the damming of a trout stream by the grist mills. These things were the realities of life, and not the actions at law or the suits in chancery.

"How does one get a fortune nowadays, Abner?" he called back across his shoulder, "for I need one like the devil. Marriage or crime, eh? Crime requires a certain courage, and they say out in the open that lawyers are decadent. With you and Randolph on the lookout, I should be afraid to go in for crime!"

He clapped a passing giant on the back, called him Harrison, accused him of having an eye on Congress, and went on across his shoulder to Abner:

"Marriage, then? Do you know a convenient orphan with a golden goose? Pleasure and a certain gain would be idyllic! The simplest men understand that. Do not the writers in Paris tell us that the French peasant on his marriage night, while embracing his bride with one arm, extends the other in order to feel the sack that contains her dowry?"

They were now on the upper floor of the tavern porch. Mr. Esdale Moore sent a negro for a dish of tea, after the English fashion.

Then he got a table at the end of the porch, somewhat apart, and the three men sat down.

"And now, Randolph," he said, "what did you find at Eastwood?"

"I am afraid," replied the Justice of the Peace, "that we found little new there. The evidence remains, with trifling additions, what it was; but Abner has arrived at some interesting opinions upon this evidence."

"I am sure Abner can clap his hand on the assassin," said the attorney. "Come, sir, let me fill your cup, and while I stand on one foot, as St. Augustine used to say, tell me who ejected my uncle, the venerable Duncan Moore, out of life."

The negro servant had returned with a great silver pot, and a tray of cups with queer kneeling purple cows on them.

Abner held out his cup.

"Sir," he said, "one must be very certain, to answer that question." His voice was deep and level, like some balanced element in nature.

He waited while the man filled the cup; then he replaced it on the table.

"And, sir," he continued slowly, "I am not yet precisely certain."

He slipped a lump of sugar slowly into the cup.

"It is the Ruler of Events who knows, sir; we can only conjecture. We cannot see the truth naked before us as He does; we must grope for it from one indication to another until we find it."

"But, reason, Abner," interrupted the lawyer, bustling in his chair; "we have that, and God has nothing better!"

"Sir," replied Abner, "I cannot think of God depending on a thing so crude as reason. If one reflects upon it, I think one will immediately see that reason is a quality exclusively peculiar to the human mind. It is a thing that God could never, by any chance, require. Reason is the method by which those who do not know the truth, step by step, finally discover it."

He paused and looked out across the table at the far-off mountains.

"And so, sir, God knows who in Virginia has a red hand from this work at Eastwood Court, without assembling the evidence and laboring to determine whither these signboards point. But Randolph and I are like children with a puzzle. We must get

all the pieces first, and then sit down and laboriously fit them up."

He looked down into his cup, his face in repose and reflective.

"Ah, sir," he went on, "if one could be certain that one had always every piece, there would no longer remain such a thing as a human mystery. Every event dovetails into every other event that precedes and follows. With the pieces complete, the truth could never elude us. But, alas, sir, human intelligence is feeble and easily deludes itself, and the relations and ramifications of events are vast and intricate."

"Then, sir," said Mr. Esdale Moore, "you do not believe that the criminal can create a series of false evidences that will be at all points consistent with the truth."

"No man can do it," replied Abner. "For to do that, one must know everything that goes before and everything that follows the event which one is attempting to falsify. And this omniscience only the intelligence of God can compass. It is impossible for the human mind to manufacture a false consistency of events except to a very limited extent."

"Then, gentlemen," cried the lawyer, "you can make me no excuse for leaving this affair a mystery."

"Yes," replied my uncle, "we could make you an excuse—a valid and sound excuse: the excuse of incompetency."

Mr. Esdale Moore laughed in his big, hearty voice.

"With your reputation, Abner, and that of Squire Randolph in Virginia, I should refuse to receive it."

"Alas," continued Abner, "we are no better than other men. A certain experience, some knowledge of the habits of criminals, and a little skill in observation are the only advantages we have. If one were born among us with, let us say, a double equipment of skull space, no criminal would ever escape him."

"He would laugh at us, Abner," said the Justice.

"He would never cease to laugh," returned my uncle, "but he would laugh the loudest at the bungling criminal. To him, the most cunning crime would be a botch; fabricated events would be conspicuous patch-work, and he would see the identity of the criminal agent in a thousand evidences."

He hesitated a moment; then he added:

"Fortunately for human society, the inconsistency of false evidence is usually so glaring that any one of us is able to see it."

"As in Lord William Russell's case," said the Justice, "where

the valet, having killed his master in such a manner as to create the aspect of suicide, inadvertently carried away the knife with which his victim was supposed to have cut his own throat."

"Precisely," said Abner. "And there is, I think, in every case something equally inconsistent, if we only look close enough to find it."

He turned to Mr. Esdale Moore.

"With a little observation, sir, to ascertain the evidence, and a little common sense to interpret its intent, Randolph and I manage to get on."

The lawyer put a leading question.

"What glaring inconsistency did you find at Eastwood?" he said.

Abner looked at Randolph, as though for permission to go on. The Justice nodded.

"Why, this thing, sir," he answered, "that a secretary that was not locked should be broken open."

"But, Abner," said the lawyer, "who, but myself, knew that this secretary was not locked? It was the custom to lock it, although it contained nothing but my uncle's playing cards. As I told Randolph, on the day of my uncle's death I put the key down among the litter of papers inside the secretary, after I had opened it, and could not find it again, so I merely closed the lid. But I alone knew this. Everybody else would imagine the secretary to be locked as usual."

"Not everybody," continued my uncle. "Reflect a moment: To believe the secretary locked on this night, one must have known that it was locked on every preceding night. To believe that it was locked on this night because the lid was closed, one must have known that it was always locked on every preceding night when the lid was closed. And further, sir, one must have known this custom so well—one must have been so certain of it—that one knew it was not worth while to attempt to open the secretary by pulling down the lid on the chance that it might not be locked, and so, broke it open at once.

"Now, sir," he went on, "does this not exclude the theory that Duncan Moore was killed by a common burglar who entered the house for the purpose of committing a robbery? Such a criminal agent could not have known this custom. He might have believed the secretary to be locked, or imagined it to be, but he could not have known it conclusively. He could not

have been so certain that he would fail to lay hold of the lid to make sure. One must assume the lowest criminal will act with some degree of intelligence."

"By Jove!" cried the attorney, striking the table, "I had a feeling that my uncle was not killed by a common thief! I thought the authorities were not at the bottom of this thing, and that is why I kept at Randolph, why I urged him to get you out to Eastwood Court."

"Sir," replied Abner, "I am obliged to you for the compliment. But your feeling was justified, and your persistence in this case will, I think, be rewarded.

"Nevertheless, sir, if you will pardon the digression, permit me to say that your remark interests me profoundly. Whence, I wonder, came this feeling that caused you to reject the obvious explanation and to urge a further and more elaborate inquiry?"

"Now, Abner," returned Mr. Esdale Moore, "I cannot answer that question. The thing was a kind of presentiment. I had a sort of feeling, as we express it. I cannot say more than that."

"I have had occasion," continued Abner, "to examine the theory of presentiments, and I find that we are forced to one of two conclusions: Either they are of an origin exterior to the individual, of which we have no reliable proof, or they are founded upon some knowledge of which the correlation in the mind is, for the moment, obscure. That is to say, a feeling, presentiment, or premonition, may be a sort of shadow thrown by an unformed conclusion.

"An unconscious or subconscious mental process produces an impression. We take this impression to be from behind the stars, when, in fact, it merely indicates the rational conclusion at which we would have arrived if we had made a strong, conscious effort to understand the enigma before us."

He drank a little tea and put the cup back gently on the table.

"Perhaps, sir, if you had gone forward with the mental processes that produced your premonition, you would have worked out the solution of this mystery. Why, I wonder, did your deductions remain subconscious?"

"That is a question in mental science," replied the lawyer.

"Is not all science mental?" continued my uncle. "Do not men take their facts in a bag to the philosopher that he may put them together? Let us reflect a moment, sir: Are not the

primitive emotions—as, for example, fear—in their initial stages always subconscious, or, as we say, instinctive? Thus, a thousand times in the day do not our bodies draw back from danger of which we are wholly unconscious? We do not go forward into these perils, and we pass on with no realization of their existence. Can we doubt, sir, that the mind also instinctively perceives danger at the end of certain mental processes and does not go forward upon them?"

The lawyer regarded my uncle in a sort of wonder.

"Abner," he said, "you forget my activities in this affair. It is I who have kept at Randolph. What instinctive fear, then, could have mentally restrained me?"

"Why, sir," replied Abner, "the same fear that instinctively restrained Randolph and myself."

Mr. Esdale Moore looked my uncle in the face.

"What fear?" he said.

"The fear," continued Abner, "of what these deductions lead to."

Abner moved his chair a little nearer to the table and went on in a lower voice.

"Now, sir, if we exclude the untenable hypothesis that this crime was committed by an unknown thief, from the motive of robbery, what explanation remains? Let us see: This secretary could have been broken open only by some one who knew that it was the custom to keep it locked. Who was certain of that custom? Obviously, sir, only those in the household of the aged Duncan Moore."

The face of the lawyer showed a profound interest. He leaned over, put his right elbow on the table, rested his chin in the trough of the thumb and finger, and with his other hand, took a box of tobacco cigarettes from his pocket and began to break it open. It was one of the elegancies of that day.

Abner went on, "Was it a servant at Eastwood Court?"

He paused, and Randolph interrupted.

"On the night of this tragedy," said the Justice of the Peace, "all the negroes in the household attended a servants' ball on a neighboring estate. They went in a body and returned in a body. The aged Duncan Moore was alive when they left the house, and dead when they returned."

"But, Randolph," Abner went on, "independent of this chance event, conclusive in itself—which I feel is an accident to which we are hardly entitled—do not our inferences legiti-

mately indicate a criminal agent other than a servant at Eastwood Court?

"Sane men do not commit violent crimes without a motive. There was no motive to move any servant except that of gain, and there was no gain to be derived from the death of the aged Duncan Moore, except that to be got from rifling his secretary. But the one who knew so much about this secretary that he was certain it was locked, would also have known enough about it to know that it contained nothing of value."

He hesitated and moved the handle of his cup.

"Now, sir," he added, "two persons remain."

The lawyer, fingering the box of cigarettes, broke it open and presented them to my uncle and Randolph. He lighted one, and over the table looked Abner in the face.

"You mean Northcote Moore and myself," he said in a firm, even voice. "Well, sir, which one was it?"

My uncle remained undisturbed.

"Sir," he said, "there was at least a pretense of consistency in the work of the one who manufactured the evidences of a burglar. There was a window open in the north wing at the end of the long, many-cornered passage that leads through Eastwood Court to the room in the south wing where the aged Duncan Moore was killed. Now some one had gone along that passage, as you pointed out to Randolph when Eastwood Court was first inspected, because there were finger-prints on the walls at the turns and angles. These finger-prints were marked in the dust on the walls of the passage on the east side, but on the west side, beginning heaviest near Duncan Moore's room, the prints were in blood.

"These marks on the wall show that the assassin did, in fact, enter by this passage and return along it. But he did not enter by the open window. The frame of this window was cemented into the casement with dust. This dust was removed only on the inside. Moreover, violence had been used to force it open, and the marks of this violence were all plainly visible on the inside of the frame."

He stopped, remained a moment silent, and then continued:

"This corridor is the usual and customary way—in fact, the only way leading from the north wing of Eastwood Court to the south wing. Duncan Moore alone occupied the south wing. And, sir, on this night, Northcote Moore and yourself alone occupied the north wing. You were both equally familiar with

this passage, since you lived in the house, and used it constantly."

Abner paused and looked at Mr. Esdale Moore.

"Shall I go on, sir?" he said.

"Pray do," replied the lawyer.

Abner continued, in his deep, level voice.

"Now, sir, you will realize why Randolph and I felt an instinctive fear of the result of these deductions, and perhaps, sir, why your subconscious conclusions went no further than a premonition."

"But the law of Virginia," put in the Justice, "is no respecter of persons. If the Governor should do a murder, his office would not save him from the gallows."

"It would not," said the lawyer. "Go on, Abner."

My uncle moved slightly in his chair.

"If the aged Duncan Moore were removed," he continued, "Northcote Moore would take the manor-house and the lands. For Esdale Moore to take the estate, both the aged Duncan Moore and the present incumbent must be removed. Only the aged Duncan Moore was removed. Who was planning a gain, then, by this criminal act? Esdale Moore or Northcote Moore?

"Another significant thing: Mr. Esdale Moore knew this sectary was unlocked on this night; Northcote Moore did not. Who, then, was the more likely to break it open as evidence of a presumptive robbery?

"And, finally, sir, who would grope along this corridor feeling with his hands for the corners and angles of the wall, one who could see, or a blind man?"

My uncle stopped and sat back in his chair.

The lawyer leaned over and put both arms on the table.

"Gentlemen," he said, since he addressed both Randolph and Abner, "you amaze me! You accuse the most prominent man in Virginia."

"Before the law," said the Justice, "all men are equal."

The lawyer turned toward my uncle, as to one of more consideration.

"While you were making your deductions," he said, "I had to insist that you go on, for I was myself included. I was bound to hear you to the end, although you shocked me at every step. But now, I beg you to reflect. Northcote Moore belongs to an ancient and honorable family. He is old; he is blind. Surely something can be done to save him."

"Nothing," replied the Justice firmly.

Abner lifted his face, placid, unmoving, like a mask.

"Perhaps," he said.

The two men before him at the table moved with astonishment.

"Perhaps!" cried the Justice of the Peace. "This is Virginia!"

But it was the lawyer who was the more amazed. He had not moved; he did not move; but his face, as by some sorcery, became suddenly perplexed.

The tavern was now deserted; everyone had gone back into the courthouse. The three men were alone. There was silence except for the noises of the village and the far-off hum of winged insects in the air. Mr. Esdale Moore sat facing north along the upper porch; Abner opposite; Randolph looking eastward toward the courthouse. My uncle did not go on at once. He reached across the table for one of the tobacco cigarettes. The lawyer mechanically took up the box with his hand nearest to the Justice of the Peace and opened the lid with his thumb and finger. Abner selected one but did not light it.

"Writers on the law," he began, "warn us against the obvious inference when dealing with the intelligent criminal agent, and for this reason: while the criminal of the lowest order seeks only to cover his identity, and the criminal of the second order to indicate another rather than himself, the criminal of the first order, sir, will sometimes undertake a subtle finesse—a double intention.

"The criminal of the lowest order gives the authorities no one to suspect. The criminal of the second order sets up a straw man before his own door, hoping to mislead the authorities. But the criminal of the first order sets it before the door of another, expecting the authorities of the state to knock it down and take the man behind it.

"Now, sir,"—my uncle paused—"looked at from this quarter, do not our obvious deductions lack a certain conclusiveness?

"If Northcote Moore were hanged for murder, Esdale Moore would take the manor-house and the landed estate. Therefore, he might wish Northcote Moore hanged, just as Northcote Moore might wish Duncan Moore murdered.

"And, if one were deliberately placing a straw man, would there be any inconsistency in breaking open a secretary obviously

unlocked? The straw, sir, would be only a trifle more conspicuous!

"And the third deduction"—his gray eyes narrowed, and he spoke slowly: "If one born blind, and another, were accustomed to go along a passage day after day; in the dark, who would grope, feeling his way in the night, step by step, along the angles of the wall—the one who could see, or the blind man?"

The amazed Justice struck the table with his clenched hand.

"By the gods," he cried, "*not the blind man!* For to the blind man, the passage was always dark!"

The lawyer had not moved, but his face, in its desperate perplexity, began to sweat. The Justice swung around upon him, but Abner put out his hand.

"A moment, Randolph," he said. "The human body is a curious structure. It has two sides, as though two similar mechanisms were joined with a central trunk—the dexter side, or that which is toward the south when the man is facing the rising sun, and the sinister side, or that which is toward the north. These sides are not coequal. One of them is controlling and dominates the man, and when the task before him is difficult, it is with this more efficient controlling side that he approaches it.

"Thus, one set on murder and desperately anxious to make no sound, to make no false step, to strike no turn or angle, would instinctively follow the side of the wall that he could feel along with his controlling hand. This passage runs north and south. The bloody finger-prints are all on the west side of the wall, the prints in the dust on the east side; therefore, the assassin followed the east side of the wall when he set out on his deadly errand, and the west side when he returned with the blood on him.

"That is to say," and his voice lifted into a stronger note, "he always followed the left side of the wall.

"Why, sir?" And he got on his feet, his voice ringing, his finger pointing at the sweating, cornered man. "Because his controlling side was on the left—because he was left handed!

"And you, sir—I have been watching you——"

The pent-up energies of Mr. Esdale Moore seemed to burst asunder.

"It's a lie!" he cried.

And he lunged at Abner across the table, with his clenched *left* hand.

THE KNIGHT'S CROSS SIGNAL PROBLEM

ERNEST BRAMAH *is the pseudonym of a London writer who, "for the quite simple and commonplace fact that for more than a quarter of a century he has been leading his own very simple life," desires to remain in a more or less unliterary seclusion. There has been considerable speculation as to his identity, and several critics have sought to associate his books with the works of various well-known contemporary authors. But Mr. Bramah is at least himself, whatever speculation there may be as to his real name—which is not that of any famous writer. Mr. Grant Richards, the English publisher, has definitely stated this fact in his introduction to a new edition of one of Mr. Bramah's books.*

That Mr. Bramah has lived in China and thoroughly familiarized himself with Chinese customs and character is attested to in his two books, "The Wallet of Kai Lung" and "Kai Lung's Golden Hours." The first of these books, written in 1899, made an immediate impression, and when the second appeared in 1922, Hilaire Belloc wrote an enthusiastic introduction for it. Mr. Bramah's first book, published in 1894, was "English Farming and Why I Turned It Up."

His two volumes of detective stories, enumerating the cases of the blind investigator, Max Carados, appeared in 1914 and 1924 respectively. The first was called simply "Max Carrados," and the second "The Eyes of Max Carrados." "The Specimen Case," a collection of sketches including another Max Carrados story, also appeared in 1924.

"The Knight's Cross Signal Problem" is taken from the first volume of Carrados exploits, "Max Carrados."

THE KNIGHT'S CROSS SIGNAL PROBLEM

By Ernest Bramah

"Louis," exclaimed Mr. Carrados, with the air of genial gaiety that Carlyle had found so incongruous to his conception of a blind man, "you have a mystery somewhere about you! I know it by your step."

Nearly a month had passed since the incident of the false Dionysius had led to the two men meeting. It was now December. Whatever Mr. Carlyle's step might indicate to the inner eye it betokened to the casual observer the manner of a crisp, alert, self-possessed man of business. Carlyle, in truth, betrayed nothing of the pessimism and despondency that had marked him on the earlier occasion.

"You have only yourself to thank that it is a very poor one," he retorted. "If you hadn't held me to a hasty promise——"

"To give me an option on the next case that baffled you, no matter what it was——"

"Just so. The consequence is that you get a very unsatisfactory affair that has no special interest to an amateur and is only baffling because it is—well——"

"Well, baffling?"

"Exactly, Max. Your would-be jest has discovered the proverbial truth. I need hardly tell you that it is only the insoluble that is finally baffling and this is very probably insoluble. You remember the awful smash on the Central and Suburban at Knight's Cross Station a few weeks ago?"

"Yes," replied Carrados, with interest. "I read the whole ghastly details at the time."

"You read?" exclaimed his friend suspiciously.

"I still use the familiar phrases," explained Carrados, with a smile. "As a matter of fact, my secretary reads to me. I mark what I want to hear and when he comes at ten o'clock we clear off the morning papers in no time."

"And how do you know what to mark?" demanded Mr. Carlyle cunningly.

Carrados's right hand, lying idly on the table, moved to a newspaper near. He ran his finger along a column heading, his eyes still turned towards his visitor.

"'The Money Market. Continued from page 2. British Railways,'" he announced.

"Extraordinary," murmured Carlyle.

"Not very," said Carrados. "If someone dipped a stick in treacle and wrote 'Rats' across a marble slab you would probably be able to distinguish what was there, blindfold."

"Probably," admitted Mr. Carlyle. "At all events we will not test the experiment."

"The difference to you of treacle on a marble background is scarcely greater than that of printers' ink on newspaper to me. But anything smaller than pica I do not read with comfort, and below long primer I cannot read at all. Hence the secretary. Now the accident, Louis."

"The accident: well, you remember all about that. An ordinary Central and Suburban passenger train, non-stop at Knight's Cross, ran past the signal and crashed into a crowded electric train that was just beginning to move out. It was like sending a garden roller down a row of handlights. Two carriages of the electric train were flattened out of existence; the next two were broken up. For the first time on an English railway there was a good stand-up smash between a heavy steam-engine and a train of light cars, and it was 'bad for the coo.'"

"Twenty-seven killed, forty something injured, eight died since," commented Carrados.

"That was bad for the Co.," said Carlyle. "Well, the main fact was plain enough. The heavy train was in the wrong. But was the engine-driver responsible? He claimed, and he claimed vehemently from the first, and he never varied one iota, that he had a 'clear' signal—that is to say, the green light, it being dark. The signalman concerned was equally dogged that he never pulled off the signal—that it was at 'danger' when the accident happened and that it had been for five minutes before. Obviously, they could not both be right."

"Why, Louis?" asked Mr. Carrados smoothly.

"The signal must either have been up or down—red or green."

"Did you ever notice the signals on the Great Northern Railway, Louis?"

"Not particularly. Why?"

"One winterly day, about the year when you and I were concerned in being born, the engine-driver of a Scotch express received the 'clear' from a signal near a little Huntingdon station called Abbots Ripton. He went on and crashed into a goods train and into the thick of the smash a down express mowed its way. Thirteen killed and the usual tale of injured. He was positive that the signal gave him a 'clear'; the signalman was equally confident that he had never pulled it off the 'danger.' Both were right, and yet the signal was in working order. As I said, it was a winterly day; it had been snowing hard and the snow froze and accumulated on the upper edge of the signal arm until its weight bore it down. That is a fact that no fiction writer dare have invented, but to this day every signal on the Great Northern pivots from the center of the arm instead of from the end, in memory of that snowstorm."

"That came out at the inquest, I presume?" said Mr. Carlyle. "We have had the Board of Trade inquiry and the inquest here and no explanation is forthcoming. Everything was in perfect order. It rests between the word of the signalman and the word of the engine-driver—not a jot of direct evidence either way. Which is right?"

"That is what you are going to find out, Louis?" suggested Carrados.

"It is what I am being paid for finding out," admitted Mr. Carlyle frankly. "But so far we are just where the inquest left it, and, between ourselves, I candidly can't see an inch in front of my face in the matter."

"Nor can I," said the blind man, with a rather wry smile. "Never mind. The engine-driver is your client, of course?"

"Yes," admitted Carlyle. "But how the deuce did you know?"

"Let us say that your sympathies are enlisted on his behalf. The jury were inclined to exonerate the signalman, weren't they? What has the company done with your man?"

"Both are suspended. Hutchins, the driver, hears that he may probably be given charge of a lavatory at one of the stations. He is a decent, bluff, short-spoken old chap, with his heart in his work. Just now you'll find him at his worst—bitter and suspicious. The thought of swabbing down a lavatory and taking pennies all day is poisoning him."

"Naturally. Well, there we have honest Hutchins: taciturn, a little touchy perhaps, grown gray in the service of the company,

and manifesting quite a bull-dog-like devotion to his favorite 538."

"Why, that actually was the number of his engine—how do you know it?" demanded Carlyle sharply.

"It was mentioned two or three times at the inquest, Louis," replied Carrados mildly.

"And you remembered—with no reason to?"

"You can generally trust a blind man's memory, especially if he has taken the trouble to develop it."

"Then you will remember that Hutchins did not make a very good impression at the time. He was surly and irritable under the ordeal. I want you to see the case from all sides."

"He called the signalman—Mead—a 'lying young dog,' across the room, I believe. Now, Mead, what is he like? You have seen him, of course?"

"Yes. He does not impress me favorably. He is glib, ingratiating, and distinctly 'greasy.' He has a ready answer for everything almost before the question is out of your mouth. He has thought of everything."

"And now you are going to tell me something, Louis," said Carrados encouragingly.

Mr. Carlyle laughed a little to cover an involuntary movement of surprise.

"There is a suggestive line that was not touched at the enquiries," he admitted. "Hutchins has been a saving man all his life, and he has received good wages. Among his class he is regarded as wealthy. I daresay that he has five hundred pounds in the bank. He is a widower with one daughter, a very nice-mannered girl of about twenty. Mead is a young man, and he and the girl are sweethearts—have been informally engaged for some time. But old Hutchins would not hear of it; he seems to have taken a dislike to the signalman from the first, and latterly he had forbidden him to come to his house or his daughter to speak to him."

"Excellent, Louis," cried Carrados in great delight. "We shall clear your man in a blaze of red and green lights yet and hang the glib, 'greasy' signalman from his own signal-post."

"It is a significant fact, seriously?"

"It is absolutely convincing."

"It may have been a slip, a mental lapse on Mead's part which he discovered the moment it was too late, and then, being too cowardly to admit his fault, and having so much at stake, he

took care to make detection impossible. It may have been that, but my idea is rather that probably it was neither quite pure accident nor pure design. I can imagine Mead meanly pluming himself over the fact that the life of this man who stands in his way, and whom he must cordially dislike, lies in his power. I can imagine the idea becoming an obsession as he dwells on it. A dozen times with his hand on the lever he lets his mind explore the possibilities of a moment's defection. Then one day he pulls the signal off in sheer bravado—and hastily puts it at danger again. He may have done it once or he may have done it oftener before he was caught in a fatal moment of irresolution. The chances are about even that the engine-driver would be killed. In any case he would be disgraced, for it is easier on the face of it to believe that a man might run past a danger signal in absentmindedness, without noticing it, than that a man should pull off a signal and replace it without being conscious of his actions."

"The fireman was killed. Does your theory involve the certainty of the fireman being killed, Louis?"

"No," said Carlyle. "The fireman is a difficulty, but looking at it from Mead's point of view—whether he has been guilty of an error or a crime—it resolves itself into this: First, the fireman may be killed. Second, he may not notice the signal at all. Third, in any case he will loyally corroborate his driver and the good old jury will discount that."

Carrados smoked thoughtfully, his open, sightless eyes merely appearing to be set in a tranquil gaze across the room.

"It would not be an improbable explanation," he said presently. "Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would say: 'People do not do these things.' But you and I, who have in our different ways studied criminology, know that they sometimes do, or else there would be no curious crimes. What have you done on that line?"

To anyone who could see, Mr. Carlyle's expression conveyed an answer.

"You are behind the scenes, Max. What was there for me to do? Still I must do something for my money. Well, I have had a very close inquiry made confidentially among the men. There might be a whisper of one of them knowing more than had come out—a man restrained by friendship, or enmity, or even grade jealousy. Nothing came of that. Then there was the remote chance that some private person had noticed the signal without

attaching any importance to it then, one who would be able to identify it still by something associated with the time. I went over the line myself. Opposite the signal the line on one side is shut in by a high blank wall; on the other side are houses, but coming below the butt-end of a scullery the signal does not happen to be visible from any road or from any window."

"My poor Louis!" said Carrados, in friendly ridicule. "You were at the end of your tether?"

"I was," admitted Carlyle. "And now that you know the sort of job it is I don't suppose that you are keen on wasting your time over it."

"That would hardly be fair, would it?" said Carrados reasonably. "No, Louis, I will take over your honest old driver and your greasy young signalman and your fatal signal that cannot be seen from anywhere."

"But it is an important point for you to remember, Max, that although the signal cannot be seen from the box, if the mechanism had gone wrong, or anyone tampered with the arm, the automatic indicator would at once have told Mead that the green light was showing. Oh, I have gone very thoroughly into the technical points, I assure you."

"I must do so too," commented Mr. Carrados gravely.

"For that matter, if there is anything you want to know, I dare say that I can tell you," suggested his visitor. "It might save your time."

"True," acquiesced Carrados. "I should like to know whether anyone belonging to the houses that bound the line there came of age or got married on the twenty-sixth of November."

Mr. Carlyle looked across curiously at his host.

"I really do not know, Max," he replied, in his crisp, precise way. "What on earth has that got to do with it, may I enquire?"

"The only explanation of the Pont St. Lin swing-bridge disaster of '75 was the reflection of a green bengal light on a cottage window."

Mr. Carlyle smiled his indulgence privately.

"My dear chap, you mustn't let your retentive memory of obscure happenings run away with you," he remarked wisely. "In nine cases out of ten the obvious explanation is the true one. The difficulty, as here, lies in proving it. Now, you would like to see these men?"

"I expect so; in any case, I will see Hutchins first."

"Both live in Holloway. Shall I ask Hutchins to come here to see you—say to-morrow? He is doing nothing."

"No," replied Carrados. "To-morrow I must call on my brokers and my time may be filled up."

"Quite right; you mustn't neglect your own affairs for this—experiment," assented Carlyle.

"Besides, I should prefer to drop in on Hutchins at his own home. Now, Louis, enough of the honest old man for one night. I have a lovely thing by Eumenes that I want to show you. To-day is—Tuesday. Come to dinner on Sunday and pour the vials of your ridicule on my want of success."

"That's an amiable way of putting it," replied Carlyle. "All right, I will."

Two hours later Carrados was again in his study, apparently, for a wonder, sitting idle. Sometimes he smiled to himself, and once or twice he laughed a little, but for the most part his pleasant, impassive face reflected no emotion and he sat with his useless eyes tranquilly fixed on an unseen distance. It was a fantastic caprice of the man to mock his sightlessness by a parade of light, and under the soft brilliance of a dozen electric brackets the room was as bright as day. At length he stood up and rang the bell.

"I suppose Mr. Greatorex isn't still here by any chance, Parkinson?" he asked, referring to his secretary.

"I think not, sir, but I will ascertain," replied the man.

"Never mind. Go to his room and bring me the last two files of *The Times*. Now"—when he returned—"turn to the earliest you have there. The date?"

"November the second."

"That will do. Find the Money Market; it will be in the Supplement. Now look down the columns until you come to British Railways."

"I have it, sir."

"Central and Suburban. Read the closing price and the change."

"Central and Suburban Ordinary, 66½-67½, fall ⅛. Preferred Ordinary, 81-81½, no change. Deferred Ordinary, 27½-27¾, fall ¼. That is all, sir."

"Now take a paper about a week on. Read the Deferred only."

"27-27¼, no change."

"Another week."

"29½-30, rise 5/8."

"Another."

"31½-32½, rise 1."

"Very good. Now on Tuesday the twenty-seventh November."

"31⅞-32¾, rise ½."

"Yes. The next day."

"24½-23½, fall 9."

"Quite so, Parkinson. There had been an accident, you see."

"Yes, sir. Very unpleasant accident. Jane knows a person whose sister's young man has a cousin who had his arm torn off in it—torn off at the socket, she says, sir. It seems to bring it home to one, sir."

"That is all. Stay—in the paper you have, look down the first money column and see if there is any reference to the Central and Suburban."

"Yes, sir. 'City and Suburbans, which after their late depression on the projected extension of the motor bus service, had been steadily creeping up on the abandonment of the scheme, and as a result of their own excellent traffic returns, suffered a heavy slump through the lamentable accident of Thursday night. The Deferred in particular at one time fell eleven points as it was felt that the possible dividend, with which rumor has of late been busy, was now out of the question.'"

"Yes; that is all. Now you can take the papers back. And let it be a warning to you, Parkinson, not to invest your savings in speculative railway deferreds."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir, I will endeavor to remember." He lingered for a moment as he shook the file of papers level. "I may say, sir, that I have my eye on a small block of cottage property at Acton. But even cottage property scarcely seems safe from legislative depredation now, sir."

The next day Mr. Carrados called on his brokers in the city. It is to be presumed that he got through his private business quicker than he expected, for after leaving Austin Friars he continued his journey to Holloway, where he found Hutchins at home and sitting morosely before his kitchen fire. Rightly assuming that his luxuriant car would involve him in a certain amount of public attention in Klondyke Street, the blind man dismissed it some distance from the house, and walked the rest of the way, guided by the almost imperceptible touch of Parkinson's arm.

"Here is a gentleman to see you, father," explained Miss Hutchins, who had come to the door. She divined the relative positions of the two visitors at a glance.

"Then why don't you take him into the parlor?" grumbled the ex-driver. His face was a testimonial of hard work and general sobriety but at the moment one might hazard from his voice and manner that he had been drinking earlier in the day.

"I don't think that the gentleman would be impressed by the difference between our parlor and our kitchen," replied the girl quaintly, "and it is warmer here."

"What's the matter with the parlor now?" demanded her father sourly. "It was good enough for your mother and me. It used to be good enough for you."

"There is nothing the matter with it, nor with the kitchen either." She turned impassively to the two who had followed her along the narrow passage. "Will you go in, sir?"

"I don't want to see no gentleman," cried Hutchins noisily. "Unless"—his manner suddenly changed to one of pitiable anxiety—"unless you're from the Company sir, to—to——"

"No; I have come on Mr. Carlyle's behalf," replied Carrados, walking to a chair as though he moved by a kind of instinct.

Hutchins laughed his wry contempt.

"Mr. Carlyle!" he reiterated; "Mr. Carlyle! Fat lot of good he's been. Why don't he *do* something for his money?"

"He has," replied Carrados, with imperturbable good-humor; "he has sent me. Now, I want to ask you a few questions."

"A few questions!" roared the irate man. "Why, blast it, I have done nothing else but answer questions for a month. I didn't pay Mr. Carlyle to ask me questions; I can get enough of that for nixes. Why don't you go and ask Mr. Herbert Ananias Mead your few questions—then you might find out something."

There was a slight movement by the door and Carrados knew that the girl had quietly left the room.

"You saw that, sir?" demanded the father, diverted to a new line of bitterness. "You saw that girl—my own daughter, that I've worked for all her life?"

"No," replied Carrados.

"The girl that's just gone out—she's my daughter," explained Hutchins.

"I know, but I did not see her. I see nothing. I am blind."

"Blind!" exclaimed the old fellow, sitting up in startled won-

derment. "You mean it, sir? You walk all right and you look at me as if you saw me. You're kidding surely."

"No," smiled Carrados. "It's quite right."

"Then it's a funny business, sir—you what are blind expecting to find something that those with their eyes couldn't," ruminated Hutchins sagely.

"There are things that you can't see with your eyes, Hutchins."

"Perhaps you are right, sir. Well, what is it you want to know?"

"Light a cigar first," said the blind man, holding out his case and waiting until the various sounds told him that his host was smoking contentedly. "The train you were driving at the time of the accident was the six-twenty-seven from Notcliff. It stopped everywhere until it reached Lambeth Bridge, the chief London station of your line. There it became something of an express, and leaving Lambeth Bridge at seven-eleven, should not stop again until it fetched Swanstead on Thames, eleven miles out, at seven-thirty-four. Then it stopped on and off from Swanstead to Ingerfield, the terminus of that branch, which it reached at eight-five."

Hutchins nodded, and then, remembering, said: "That's right, sir."

"That was your business all day—running between Notcliff and Ingerfield?"

"Yes, sir. Three journeys up and three down mostly."

"With the same stops on all the down journeys?"

"No. The seven-eleven is the only one that does a run from the Bridge to Swanstead. You see, it is just on the close of the evening rush, as they call it. A good many late business gentlemen living at Swanstead use the seven-eleven regular. The other journeys we stop at every station to Lambeth Bridge, and then here and there beyond."

"There are, of course, other trains doing exactly the same journey—a service, in fact?"

"Yes, sir. About six."

"And do any of those—say, during the rush—do any of those run non-stop from Lambeth to Swanstead?"

Hutchins reflected a moment. All the choler and restlessness had melted out of the man's face. He was again the excellent artisan, slow but capable and self-reliant.

"That I couldn't definitely say, sir. Very few short-distance

trains pass the junction, but some of those may. A guide would show us in a minute but I haven't got one."

"Never mind. You said at the inquest that it was no uncommon thing for you to be pulled up at the 'stop' signal east of Knight's Cross Station. How often would that happen—only with the seven-eleven, mind."

"Perhaps three times a week; perhaps twice."

"The accident was on a Thursday. Have you noticed that you were pulled up oftener on a Thursday than on any other day?"

A smile crossed the driver's face at the question.

"You don't happen to live at Swanstead yourself, sir?" he asked in reply.

"No," admitted Carrados. "Why?"

"Well, sir, we were *always* pulled up on Thursday; practically always, you may say. It got to be quite a saying among those who used the train regular; they used to look out for it."

Carrados's sightless eyes had the one quality of concealing emotion supremely. "Oh," he commented softly, "always; and it was quite a saying, was it? And *why* was it always so on Thursday?"

"It had to do with the early closing, I'm told. The suburban traffic was a bit different. By rights we ought to have been set back two minutes for that day, but I suppose it wasn't thought worth while to alter us in the time-table, so we most always had to wait outside Three Deep tunnel for a west-bound electric to make good."

"You were prepared for it then?"

"Yes, sir, I was," said Hutchins, reddening at some recollection, "and very down about it was one of the jury over that. But, mayhap once in three months, I did get through even on a Thursday, and it's not for me to question whether things are right or wrong just because they are not what I may expect. The signals are my orders, sir—stop! go on! and it's for me to obey, as you would a general on the field of battle. What would happen otherwise! It was nonsense what they said about going cautious; and the man who stated it was a barber who didn't know the difference between a 'distance' and a 'stop' signal down to the minute they gave their verdict. My orders, sir, given me by that signal, was 'Go right ahead and keep to your running time!'"

Carrados nodded a soothing assent. "That is all, I think," he remarked.

"All!" exclaimed Hutchins in surprise. "Why, sir, you can't have got much idea of it yet."

"Quite enough. And I know it isn't pleasant for you to be taken along the same ground over and over again."

The man moved awkwardly in his chair and pulled nervously at his grizzled beard.

"You mustn't take any notice of what I said just now, sir," he apologized. "You somehow make me feel that something may come of it; but I've been badgered about and accused and cross-examined from one to another of them these weeks till it's fairly made me bitter against everything. And now they talk of putting me in a lavatory—me that has been with the company for five and forty years and on the foot-plate thirty-two—a man suspected of running past a danger signal."

"You have had a rough time, Hutchins; you will have to exercise your patience a little longer yet," said Carrados sympathetically.

"You think something may come of it, sir? You think you will be able to clear me? Believe me, sir, if you could give me something to look forward to it might save me from——" He pulled himself up and shook his head sorrowfully. "I've been near it," he added simply.

Carrados reflected and took his resolution.

"To-day is Wednesday. I think you may hope to hear something from your general manager towards the middle of next week."

"Good God, sir! You really mean that?"

"In the interval show your good sense by behaving reasonably. Keep civilly to yourself and don't talk. Above all"—he nodded towards a quart jug that stood on the table between them, an incident that filled the simple-minded engineer with boundless wonder when he recalled it afterwards—"above all, leave that alone."

Hutchins snatched up the vessel and brought it crashing down on the hearthstone, his face shining with a set resolution.

"I've done with it, sir. It was the bitterness and despair that drove me to that. Now I can do without it."

The door was hastily opened and Miss Hutchins looked anxiously from her father to the visitors and back again.

"Oh, whatever is the matter?" she exclaimed. "I heard a great crash."

"This gentleman is going to clear me, Meg, my dear," blurted out the old man irrepressibly. "And I've done with the drink forever."

"Hutchins! Hutchins!" said Carrados warningly.

"My daughter, sir; you wouldn't have her not know?" pleaded Hutchins, rather crest-fallen. "It won't go any further."

Carrados laughed quietly to himself as he felt Margaret Hutchins's startled and questioning eyes attempting to read his mind. He shook hands with the engine-driver without further comment, however, and walked out into the commonplace little street under Parkinson's unobtrusive guidance.

"Very nice of Miss Hutchins to go into half-mourning, Parkinson," he remarked as they went along. "Thoughtful, and yet not ostentatious."

"Yes, sir," agreed Parkinson, who had long ceased to wonder at his master's perceptions.

"The Romans, Parkinson, had a saying to the effect that gold carries no smell. That is a pity sometimes. What jewelry did Miss Hutchins wear?"

"Very little, sir. A plain gold brooch representing a merry-thought—the merry-thought of a sparrow, I should say, sir. The only other article was a smooth-backed gun-metal watch, suspended from a gun-metal bow."

"Nothing showy or expensive, eh?"

"Oh dear no, sir. Quite appropriate for a young person of her position."

"Just what I should have expected." He slackened his pace. "We are passing a hoarding, are we not?"

"Yes, sir."

"We will stand here a moment. Read me the letterpress of the poster before us."

"This 'Oxo' one, sir?"

"Yes."

"'Oxo,' sir."

Carrados was convulsed with silent laughter. Parkinson had infinitely more dignity and conceded merely a tolerant recognition of the ludicrous.

"That was a bad shot, Parkinson," remarked his master when he could speak. "We will try another."

For three minutes, with scrupulous conscientiousness on the

part of the reader and every appearance of keen interest on the part of the hearer, there were set forth the particulars of a sale by auction of superfluous timber and builders' material.

"That will do," said Carrados, when the last detail had been reached. "We can be seen from the door of No. 107 still?"

"Yes, sir."

"No indication of anyone coming to us from there?"

"No, sir."

Carrados walked thoughtfully on again. In the Holloway Road they rejoined the waiting motor-car. "Lambeth Bridge Station" was the order the driver received.

From the station the car was sent on home and Parkinson was instructed to take two first-class singles for Richmond, which could be reached by changing at Stafford Road. The "evening rush" had not yet commenced and they had no difficulty in finding an empty carriage when the train came in.

Parkinson was kept busy that journey describing what he saw at various points between Lambeth Bridge and Knight's Cross. For a quarter of a mile Carrados's demands on the eyes and the memory of his remarkable servant were wide and incessant. Then his questions ceased. They had passed the "stop" signal, east of Knight's Cross Station.

The following afternoon they made the return journey as far as Knight's Cross. This time, however, the surroundings failed to interest Carrados. "We are going to look at some rooms," was the information he offered on the subject, and an imperturbable "Yes, sir" had been the extent of Parkinson's comment on the unusual proceeding. After leaving the station they turned sharply along a road that ran parallel with the line, a dull thoroughfare of substantial, elderly houses that were beginning to sink into decrepitude. Here and there a corner residence displayed the brass plate of a professional occupant, but for the most part they were given up to the various branches of second-rate apartment letting.

"The third house after the one with the flagstaff," said Carrados.

Parkinson rang the bell, which was answered by a young servant, who took an early opportunity of assuring them that she was not tidy as it was rather early in the afternoon. She informed Carrados, in reply to his inquiry, that Miss Chubb was at home, and showed them into a melancholy little sitting-room to await her appearance.

"I shall be 'almost' blind here, Parkinson," remarked Carrados, walking about the room. "It saves explanation."

"Very good, sir," replied Parkinson.

Five minutes later, an interval suggesting that Miss Chubb also found it rather early in the afternoon, Carrados was arranging to take rooms for his attendant and himself for the short time that he would be in London, seeing an oculist.

"One bedroom, mine, must face north," he stipulated. "It has to do with the light."

Miss Chubb replied that she quite understood. Some gentlemen, she added, had their requirements, others their fancies. She endeavored to suit all. The bedroom she had in view from the first *did* face north. She would not have known, only the last gentleman, curiously enough, had made the same request.

"A sufferer like myself?" enquired Carrados affably.

Miss Chubb did not think so. In his case she regarded it merely as a fancy. He had said that he could not sleep on any other side. She had had to turn out of her own room to accommodate him, but if one kept an apartment-house one had to be adaptable; and Mr. Ghoosh was certainly very liberal in his ideas.

"Ghoosh? An Indian gentleman, I presume?" hazarded Carrados.

It appeared that Mr. Ghoosh was an Indian. Miss Chubb confided that at first she had been rather perturbed at the idea of taking in "a black man," as she confessed to regarding him. She reiterated, however, that Mr. Ghoosh proved to be "quite the gentleman." Five minutes of affability put Carrados in full possession of Mr. Ghoosh's manner of life and movements—the dates of his arrival and departure, his solitariness and his daily habits.

"This would be the best bedroom," said Miss Chubb.

It was a fair-sized room on the first floor. The window looked out on to the roof of an outbuilding; beyond, the deep cutting of the railway line. Opposite stood the dead wall that Mr. Carlyle had spoken of.

Carrados "looked" round the room with the discriminating glance that sometimes proved so embarrassing to those who knew him.

"I have to take a little daily exercise," he remarked, walking to the window and running his hand up the woodwork. "You

will not mind my fixing a 'developer' here, Miss Chubb—a few small screws?"

Miss Chubb thought not. Then she was sure not. Finally she ridiculed the idea of minding with scorn.

"If there is width enough," mused Carrados, spanning the upright critically. "Do you happen to have a wooden foot-rule convenient?"

"Well, to be sure!" exclaimed Miss Chubb, opening a rapid succession of drawers until she produced the required article. "When we did out this room after Mr. Ghoosh, there was this very ruler among the things that he hadn't thought worth taking. This is what you require, sir?"

"Yes," replied Carrados, accepting it, "I think this is exactly what I require." It was a common new white-wood rule, such as one might buy at any small stationer's for a penny. He carelessly took off the width of the upright, reading the figures with a touch; and then continued to run a finger-tip delicately up and down the edges of the instrument.

"Four and seven-eighths," was his unspoken conclusion.

"I hope it will do, sir."

"Admirably," replied Carrados. "But I haven't reached the end of my requirements yet, Miss Chubb."

"No, sir?" said the landlady, feeling that it would be a pleasure to oblige so agreeable a gentleman, "what else might there be?"

"Although I can see very little I like to have a light, but not any kind of light. Gas I cannot do with. Do you think that you would be able to find me an oil lamp?"

"Certainly, sir. I got out a very nice brass lamp that I have specially for Mr. Ghoosh. He read a good deal of an evening and he preferred a lamp."

"That is very convenient. I suppose it is large enough to burn for a whole evening?"

"Yes, indeed. And very particular he was always to have it filled every day."

"A lamp without oil is not very useful," smiled Carrados, following her towards another room, and absent-mindedly slipping the foot-rule into his pocket.

Whatever Parkinson thought of the arrangement of going into second-rate apartments in an obscure street it is to be inferred that his devotion to his master was sufficient to overcome his private emotions as a self-respecting "man." At all events,

as they were approaching the station he asked, and without a trace of feeling, whether there were any orders for him with reference to the proposed migration.

"None, Parkinson," replied his master. "We must be satisfied with our present quarters."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Parkinson, with some constraint. "I understood that you had taken the rooms for a week certain."

"I am afraid that Miss Chubb will be under the same impression. Unforeseen circumstances will prevent our going, however. Mr. Greatorex must write to-morrow, enclosing a cheque, with my regrets, and adding a penny for this ruler which I seem to have brought away with me. It, at least, is something for the money."

Parkinson may be excused for not attempting to understand the course of events.

"Here is your train coming in, sir," he merely said.

"We will let it go and wait for another. Is there a signal at either end of the platform?"

"Yes, sir; at the further end."

"Let us walk towards it. Are there any of the porters or officials about here?"

"No, sir; none."

"Take this ruler. I want you to go up the steps—there are steps up the signal, by the way?"

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to measure the glass of the lamp. Do not go up any higher than is necessary, but if you have to stretch be careful not to mark off the measurement with your nail, although the impulse is a natural one. That has been done already."

Parkinson looked apprehensively round and about. Fortunately the part was a dark and unfrequented spot and everyone else was moving towards the exit at the other end of the platform. Fortunately, also, the signal was not a high one.

"As near as I can judge on the rounded surface, the glass is four and seven-eighths across," reported Parkinson.

"Thank you," replied Carrados, returning the measure to his pocket," four and seven-eighths is quite near enough. Now we will take the next train back."

Sunday evening came, and with it Mr. Carlyle to the Turrets at the appointed hour. He brought to the situation a mind poised for any eventuality and a trenchant eye. As the time went

on and the impenetrable Carrados made no allusion to the case, Carlyle's manner inclined to a waggish commiseration of his host's position. Actually, he said little, but the crisp precision of his voice when the path lay open to a remark of any significance left little to be said.

It was not until they had finished dinner and returned to the library that Carrados gave the slightest hint of anything unusual being in the air. His first indication of coming events was to remove the key from the outside to the inside of the door.

"What are you doing, Max?" demanded Mr. Carlyle, his curiosity overcoming the indirect attitude.

"You have been very entertaining, Louis," replied his friend, "but Parkinson should be back very soon now and it is as well to be prepared. Do you happen to carry a revolver?"

"Not when I come to dine with you, Max," replied Carlyle, with all the aplomb he could muster. "Is it usual?"

Carrados smiled affectionately at his guest's agile recovery and touched the secret spring of a drawer in an antique bureau by his side. The little hidden receptacle shot smoothly out, disclosing a pair of dull-blued pistols.

"To-night, at all events, it might be prudent," he replied, handing one to Carlyle and putting the other into his own pocket. "Our man may be here at any minute, and we do not know in what temper he will come."

"Our man!" exclaimed Carlyle, craning forward in excitement. "Max! you don't mean to say that you have got Mead to admit it?"

"No one has admitted it," said Carrados. "And it is not Mead."

"Not Mead. . . . Do you mean that Hutchins——?"

"Neither Mead nor Hutchins. The man who tampered with the signal—for Hutchins was right and a green light *was* exhibited—is a young Indian from Bengal. His name is Drishna and he lives at Swanstead."

Mr. Carlyle stared at his friend between sheer surprise and blank incredulity.

"You really mean this, Carrados?" he said.

"My fatal reputation for humor!" smiled Carrados. "If I am wrong, Louis, the next hour will expose it."

"But why—why—why? The colossal villainy, the unparalleled audacity!" Mr. Carlyle lost himself among incredulous superlatives and could only stare.

"Chiefly to get himself out of a disastrous speculation," replied Carrados, answering the question. "If there was another motive—or at least an incentive—which I suspect, doubtless we shall hear of it."

"All the same, Max, I don't think that you have treated me quite fairly," protested Carlyle, getting over his first surprise and passing to a sense of injury. "Here we are and I know nothing, absolutely nothing, of the whole affair."

"We both have our ideas of pleasantry, Louis," replied Carrados genially. "But I dare say you are right and perhaps there is still time to atone." In the fewest possible words he outlined the course of his investigations. "And now you know all that is to be known until Drishna arrives."

"But will he come?" questioned Carlyle doubtfully. "He may be suspicious."

"Yes, he will be suspicious."

"Then he will not come."

"On the contrary, Louis, he will come because my letter will make him suspicious. He *is* coming; otherwise Parkinson would have telephoned me at once and we should have had to take other measures."

"What did you say, Max?" asked Carlyle curiously.

"I wrote that I was anxious to discuss an Indo-Scythian inscription with him, and sent my car in the hope that he would be able to oblige me."

"But is he interested in Indo-Scythian inscriptions?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," admitted Carrados, and Mr. Carlyle was throwing up his hands in despair when the sound of a motor-car wheels softly kissing the gravel surface of the drive outside brought him to his feet.

"By Gad, you are right, Max!" he exclaimed, peeping through the curtains. "There is a man inside."

"Mr. Drishna," announced Parkinson, a minute later.

The visitor came into the room with leisurely self-possession that might have been real or a desperate assumption. He was a slightly built young man of about twenty-five, with black hair and eyes, a small, carefully trained mustache, and a dark olive skin. His physiognomy was not displeasing, but his expression had a harsh and supercilious tinge. In attire he erred towards the immaculately spruce.

"Mr. Carrados?" he said inquiringly.

Carrados, who had risen, bowed slightly without offering his hand.

"This gentleman," he said, indicating his friend, "is Mr. Carlyle, the celebrated private detective."

The Indian shot a very sharp glance at the object of this description. Then he sat down.

"You wrote me a letter, Mr. Carrados," he remarked, in English that scarcely betrayed any foreign origin, "a rather curious letter, I may say. You asked me about an ancient inscription. I know nothing of antiquities; but I thought, as you had sent, that it would be more courteous if I came and explained this to you."

"That was the object of my letter," replied Carrados.

"You wished to see me?" said Drishna, unable to stand the ordeal of the silence that Carrados imposed after his remark.

"When you left Miss Chubb's house you left a ruler behind." One lay on the desk by Carrados and he took it up as he spoke.

"I don't understand what you are talking about," said Drishna guardedly. "You are making some mistake."

"The ruler was marked at four and seven-eighths inches—the measure of the glass of the signal lamp outside."

The unfortunate young man was unable to repress a start. His face lost its healthy tone. Then, with a sudden impulse, he made a step forward and snatched the object from Carrados's hand.

"If it is mine I have a right to it," he exclaimed, snapping the ruler in two and throwing it on to the back of the blazing fire. "It is nothing."

"Pardon me, I did not say that the one you have so impetuously disposed of was yours. As a matter of fact, it was mine. Yours is—elsewhere."

"Wherever it is you have no right to it if it is mine," panted Drishna, with rising excitement. "You are a thief, Mr. Carrados. I will not stay any longer here."

He jumped up and turned towards the door. Carlyle made a step forward, but the precaution was unnecessary.

"One moment, Mr. Drishna," interposed Carrados, in his smoothest tones. "It is a pity, after you have come so far, to leave without hearing of my investigations in the neighborhood of Shaftesbury Avenue."

Drishna sat down again.

"As you like," he muttered. "It does not interest me."

"I wanted to obtain a lamp of a certain pattern," continued Carrados. "It seemed to me that the simplest explanation would be to say that I wanted it for a motor-car. Naturally I went to Long Acre. At the first shop I said: 'Wasn't it here that a friend of mine, an Indian gentleman, recently had a lamp made with a green glass that was nearly five inches across?' No, it was not there but they could make me one. At the next shop the same; at the third, and fourth, and so on. Finally my persistence was rewarded. I found the place where the lamp had been made, and at the cost of ordering another I obtained all the details I wanted. It was news to them, the shopman informed me, that in some parts of India green was the danger color and therefore tail lamps had to show a green light. The incident made some impression on him and he would be able to identify their customer—who paid in advance and gave no address—among a thousand of his countrymen. Do I succeed in interesting you, Mr. Drishna?"

"Do you?" replied Drishna, with a languid yawn. "Do I look interested?"

"You must make allowance for my unfortunate blindness," apologized Carrados, with grim irony.

"Blindness!" exclaimed Drishna, dropping his affectation of unconcern as though electrified by the word, "do you mean—really blind—that you do not see me?"

"Alas, no," admitted Carrados.

The Indian withdrew his right hand from his coat pocket and with a tragic gesture flung a heavy revolver down on the table between them.

"I have had you covered all the time, Mr. Carrados, and if I had wished to go and you or your friend had raised a hand to stop me, it would have been at the peril of your lives," he said, in a voice of melancholy triumph. "But what is the use of defying fate, and who successfully evades his destiny? A month ago I went to see one of our people who reads the future and sought to know the course of certain events. 'You need fear no human eye,' was the message given to me. Then she added: 'But when the sightless sees the unseen, make your peace with Yama.' And I thought she spoke of the Great Hereafter!"

"This amounts to an admission of your guilt," exclaimed Mr. Carlyle practically.

"I bow to the decree of fate," replied Drishna. "And it is fitting to the universal irony of existence that a blind man

should be the instrument. I don't imagine, Mr. Carlyle," he added maliciously, "that you, with your eyes, would ever have brought that result about."

"You are a very cold-blooded young scoundrel, sir!" retorted Mr. Carlyle. "Good heavens! do you realize that you are responsible for the death of scores of innocent men and women?"

"Do *you* realize, Mr. Carlyle, that you and your Government and your soldiers are responsible for the death of thousands of innocent men and women in my country every day? If England was occupied by the Germans who quartered an army and an administration with their wives and their families and all their expensive paraphernalia on the unfortunate country until the whole nation was reduced to the verge of famine, and the appointment of every new official meant the callous death sentence on a thousand men and women to pay his salary, then if you went to Berlin and wrecked a train you would be hailed a patriot. What Boadicea did and—and Samson, so have I. If they were heroes, so am I."

"Well, upon my word!" cried the highly scandalized Carlyle, "what next! Boadicea was a—er—semi-legendary person, whom we may possibly admire at a distance. Personally, I do not profess to express an opinion. But Samson, I would remind you, is a Biblical character. Samson was mocked as an enemy. You, I do not doubt, have been entertained as a friend."

"And haven't I been mocked and despised and sneered at every day of my life here by your supercilious, superior, empty-headed men?" flashed back Drishna, his eyes leaping into malignity and his voice trembling with sudden passion. "Oh! how I hated them as I passed them in the street and recognized by a thousand petty insults their lordly English contempt for me as an inferior being—a nigger. How I longed with Caligula that a nation had a single neck that I might destroy it at one blow. I loathe you in your complacent hypocrisy, Mr. Carlyle, despise and utterly abominate you from an eminence of superiority that you can never even understand."

"I think we are getting rather away from the point, Mr. Drishna," interposed Carrados, with the impartiality of a judge. "Unless I am misinformed, you are not so ungallant as to include everyone you have met here in your execration?"

"Ah, no," admitted Drishna, descending into a quite ingenuous frankness. "Much as I hate your men I love your women. How is it possible that a nation should be so divided—its men

so dull-witted and offensive, its women so quick, sympathetic and capable of appreciating?"

"But a little expensive, too, at times?" suggested Carrados.

Drishna sighed heavily.

"Yes; it is incredible. It is the generosity of their large nature. My allowance, though what most of you would call noble, has proved quite inadequate. I was compelled to borrow money and the interest became overwhelming. Bankruptcy was impracticable because I should have then been recalled by my people, and much as I detest England a certain reason made the thought of leaving it unbearable."

"Connected with the Arcady Theater?"

"You know? Well, do not let us introduce the lady's name. In order to restore myself I speculated on the Stock Exchange. My credit was good through my father's position and the standing of the firm to which I am attached. I heard on reliable authority, and very early, that the Central and Suburban, and the Deferred especially, was safe to fall heavily, through a motor bus amalgamation that was then a secret. I opened a bear account and sold largely. The shares fell, but only fractionally, and I waited. Then, unfortunately, they began to go up. Adverse forces were at work and rumors were put about. I could not stand the settlement, and in order to carry over an account I was literally compelled to deal temporarily with some securities that were not technically my own property."

"Embezzlement, sir," commented Mr. Carlyle icily. "But what is embezzlement on the top of wholesale murder!"

"That is what it is called. In my case, however, it was only to be temporary. Unfortunately, the rise continued. Then, at the height of my despair, I chanced to be returning to Swanstead rather earlier than usual one evening, and the train was stopped at a certain signal to let another pass. There was conversation in the carriage and I learned certain details. One said that there would be an accident some day, and so forth. In a flash—as by an inspiration—I saw how the circumstance might be turned to account. A bad accident and the shares would certainly fall and my position would be retrieved. I think Mr. Carrados has somehow learned the rest."

"Max," said Mr. Carlyle, with emotion, "is there any reason why you should not send your man for a police officer and have this monster arrested on his own confession without further delay?"

"Pray do so, Mr. Carrados," acquiesced Drishna. "I shall certainly be hanged, but the speech I shall prepare will ring from one end of India to the other; my memory will be venerated as that of a martyr; and the emancipation of my motherland will be hastened by my sacrifice."

"In other words," commented Carrados, "there will be disturbances at half-a-dozen disaffected places, a few unfortunate police will be clubbed to death, and possibly worse things may happen. That does not suit us, Mr. Drishna."

"And how do you propose to prevent it?" asked Drishna, with cool assurance.

"It is very unpleasant being hanged on a dark winter morning; very cold, very friendless, very inhuman. The long trial, the solitude and the confinement, the thoughts of the long sleepless night before, the hangman and the pinioning and the noosing of the rope, are apt to prey on the imagination. Only a very stupid man can take hanging easily."

"What do you want me to do instead, Mr. Carrados?" asked Drishna shrewdly.

Carrados's hand closed on the weapon that still lay on the table between them. Without a word he pushed it across.

"I see," commented Drishna, with a short laugh and a gleaming eye. "Shoot myself and hush it up to suit your purpose. Withhold my message to save the exposures of a trial, and keep the flame from the torch of insurrectionary freedom."

"Also," interposed Carrados mildly, "to save your worthy people a good deal of shame, and to save the lady who is nameless the unpleasant necessity of relinquishing the house and the income which you have just settled on her. She certainly would not then venerate your memory."

"What is that?"

"The transaction which you carried through was based on a felony and could not be upheld. The firm you dealt with will go to the courts, and the money, being directly traceable, will be held forfeit as no good consideration passed."

"Max!" cried Mr. Carlyle hotly, "you are not going to let this scoundrel cheat the gallows after all?"

"The best use you can make of the gallows is to cheat it, Louis," replied Carrados. "Have you ever reflected what human beings will think of us a hundred years hence?"

"Oh, of course I'm not really in favor of hanging," admitted Mr. Carlyle.

"Nobody really is. But we go on hanging. Mr. Drishna is a dangerous animal who for the sake of pacific animals must cease to exist. Let his barbarous exploit pass into oblivion with him. The disadvantages of spreading it broadcast immeasurably outweigh the benefits."

"I have considered," announced Drishna. "I will do as you wish."

"Very well," said Carrados. "Here is some plain notepaper. You had better write a letter to someone saying that the financial difficulties in which you are involved make life unbearable."

"But there are no financial difficulties—now."

"That does not matter in the least. It will be put down to an hallucination and taken as showing the state of your mind."

"But what guarantee have we that he will not escape?" whispered Mr. Carlyle.

"He cannot escape," replied Carrados tranquilly. "His identity is too clear."

"I have no intention of trying to escape," put in Drishna, as he wrote. "You hardly imagine that I have not considered this eventuality, do you?"

"All the same," murmured the ex-lawyer, "I should like to have a jury behind me. It is one thing to execute a man morally; it is another to do it almost literally."

"Is that all right?" asked Drishna, passing across the letter he had written.

Carrados smiled at this tribute to his perception.

"Quite excellent," he replied courteously. "There is a train at nine-forty. Will that suit you?"

Drishna nodded and stood up. Mr. Carlyle had a very uneasy feeling that he ought to do something but could not suggest to himself what.

The next moment he heard his friend heartily thanking the visitor for the assistance he had been in the matter of the Indo-Scythian inscription, as they walked across the hall together. Then a door closed.

"I believe that there is something positively uncanny about Max at times," murmured the perturbed gentleman to himself.

THE ORACLE OF THE DOG

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON *came of a family of estate-agents, and was born at Campden Hill, Kensington, on May 29, 1874. He was educated at St. Paul's School, and later attended classes at the Slade School of Art. But though his early ambition was painting, his literary instincts soon took the ascendancy, and he began writing for various magazines and reviews. He also served a short apprenticeship in a publisher's office. After the publication of two volumes of poems, "The Wild Knight" and "Greybeards at Play," in 1900, he definitely embraced journalism, and his signed contributions appeared regularly in such liberal journals as the "Daily News" and the "Speaker." Since then he has tried his hand, with sustained success, at many different branches of literature—fiction, essays, criticism, and biography—bringing always to his task a brilliant style and a fresh point of view.*

The first of his four volumes of Father Brown detective stories, "The Innocence of Father Brown," appeared in 1911. This was followed by "The Wisdom of Father Brown" (1914), "The Incredulity of Father Brown" (1926), and "The Secret of Father Brown" (1927). His volumes of poetry include "Magic" (1913); and of his essays may be mentioned "Heretics" (1905), "Orthodoxy" (1908), "Tremendous Trifles" (1909), and "Alarums and Excursions" (1911). An unusual novel of his is "The Man Who Was Thursday" (1908); and among his biographical and critical works are "Robert Browning" (1903), "G. F. Watts" (1904), "Charles Dickens" (1906), "George Bernard Shaw" (1909), and "The Victorian Age in Literature" (1913).

The adventure of Father Brown which is included in the present volume is taken from "The Incredulity of Father Brown."

THE ORACLE OF THE DOG

By G. K. Chesterton

"Yes," said Father Brown, "I always like a dog, so long as he isn't spelt backwards."

Those who are quick in talking are not always quick in listening. Sometimes even their brilliancy produces a sort of stupidity. Father Brown's friend and companion was a young man with a stream of ideas and stories, an enthusiastic young man named Fiennes, with eager blue eyes and blond hair that seemed to be brushed back, not merely with a hair-brush but with the wind of the world as he rushed through it. But he stopped in the torrent of his talk in a momentary bewilderment before he saw the priest's very simple meaning.

"You mean that people make too much of them?" he said. "Well, I don't know. They're marvelous creatures. Sometimes I think they know a lot more than we do."

Father Brown said nothing; but continued to stroke the head of the big retriever in a half-abstracted but apparently soothing fashion.

"Why," said Fiennes, warming again to his monologue, "there was a dog in the case I've come to see you about; what they call the 'Invisible Murder Case,' you know. It's a strange story, but from my point of view the dog is about the strangest thing in it. Of course, there's the mystery of the crime itself, and how old Druce can have been killed by somebody else when he was all alone in the summer-house——"

The hand stroking of the dog stopped for a moment in its rhythmic movement; and Father Brown said calmly, "Oh, it was a summer-house, was it?"

"I thought you'd read all about it in the papers," answered Fiennes. "Stop a minute; I believe I've got a cutting that will give you all the particulars." He produced a strip of newspaper from his pocket and handed it to the priest, who began to read it, holding it close to his blinking eyes with one hand while the

other continued its half-conscious caresses of the dog. It looked like the parable of a man not letting his right hand know what his left hand did.

"Many mystery stories, about men murdered behind locked doors and windows, and murderers escaping without means of entrance and exit, have come true in the course of the extraordinary events at Cranston on the coast of Yorkshire, where Colonel Druce was found stabbed from behind by a dagger that has entirely disappeared from the scene, and apparently even from the neighborhood.

"The summer-house in which he died was indeed accessible at one entrance, the ordinary doorway which looked down the central walk of the garden towards the house. But by a combination of events almost to be called a coincidence, it appears that both the path and the entrance were watched during the crucial time, and there is a chain of witnesses who confirm each other. The summer-house stands at the extreme end of the garden, where there is no exit or entrance of any kind. The central garden path is a lane between two ranks of tall delphiniums, planted so close that any stray step off the path would leave its traces; and both path and plants run right up to the very mouth of the summer-house, so that no straying from that straight path could fail to be observed, and no other mode of entrance can be imagined.

"Patrick Floyd, secretary of the murdered man, testified that he had been in a position to overlook the whole garden from the time when Colonel Druce last appeared alive in the doorway to the time when he was found dead; as he, Floyd, had been on the top of a step-ladder clipping the garden hedge. Janet Druce, the dead man's daughter, confirmed this, saying that she had sat on the terrace of the house throughout that time and had seen Floyd at his work. Touching some part of the time, this is again supported by Donald Druce, her brother, who overlooked the garden standing at his bedroom window in his dressing-gown, for he had risen late. Lastly the account is consistent with that given by Dr. Valentine, a neighbor, who called for a time to talk with Miss Druce on the terrace, and by the Colonel's solicitor, Mr. Aubrey Traill, who was apparently the last to see the murdered man alive—presumably with the exception of the murderer.

"All are agreed that the course of events was as follows:

about half-past three in the afternoon, Miss Druce went down the path to ask her father when he would like tea; but he said he did not want any and was waiting to see Traill, his lawyer, who was to be sent to him in the summer-house. The girl then came away and met Traill coming down the path; she directed him to her father and he went in as directed. About half an hour afterwards he came out again, the Colonel coming with him to the door and showing himself to all appearance in health and even high spirits. He had been somewhat annoyed earlier in the day by his son's irregular hours, but seemed to recover his temper in a perfectly normal fashion, and had been rather markedly genial in receiving other visitors, including two of his nephews who came over for the day. But as these were out walking during the whole period of the tragedy, they had no evidence to give. It is said, indeed, that the Colonel was not on very good terms with Dr. Valentine, but that gentleman only had a brief interview with the daughter of the house, to whom he is supposed to be paying serious attentions.

"Traill, the solicitor, says he left the Colonel entirely alone in the summer-house, and this is confirmed by Floyd's bird's-eye view of the garden, which showed nobody else passing the only entrance. Ten minutes later Miss Druce again went down the garden and had not reached the end of the path, when she saw her father, who was conspicuous by his white linen coat, lying in a heap on the floor. She uttered a scream which brought others to the spot, and on entering the place they found the Colonel lying dead beside his basket-chair, which was also upset. Dr. Valentine, who was still in the immediate neighborhood, testified that the wound was made by some sort of stiletto, entering under the shoulder-blade and piercing the heart. The police have searched the neighborhood for such a weapon, but no trace of it can be found."

"So Colonel Druce wore a white coat, did he?" said Father Brown as he put down the paper.

"Trick he learnt in the tropics," replied Fiennes with some wonder. "He'd had some queer adventures there, by his own account; and I fancy his dislike of Valentine was connected with the doctor coming from the tropics, too. But it's all an infernal puzzle. The account there is pretty accurate; I didn't see the tragedy, in the sense of the discovery; I was out walking

with the young nephews and the dog—the dog I wanted to tell you about. But I saw the stage set for it as described: the straight lane between the blue flowers right up to the dark entrance, and the lawyer going down it in his blacks and his silk hat, and the red head of the secretary showing high above the green hedge as he worked on it with his shears. Nobody could have mistaken that red head at any distance; and if people say they saw it there all the time, you may be sure they did. This red-haired secretary Floyd is quite a character; a breathless, bounding sort of fellow, always doing everybody's work as he was doing the gardener's. I think he is an American; he's certainly got the American view of life; what they call the viewpoint, bless 'em."

"What about the lawyer?" asked Father Brown.

There was a silence and then Fiennes spoke quite slowly for him. "Traill struck me as a singular man. In his fine black clothes he was almost foppish, yet you can hardly call him fashionable. For he wore a pair of long, luxuriant black whiskers such as haven't been seen since Victorian times. He had rather a fine grave face and a fine grave manner, but every now and then he seemed to remember to smile. And when he showed his white teeth he seemed to lose a little of his dignity and there was something faintly fawning about him. It may have been only embarrassment, for he would also fidget with his cravat and his tie-pin, which were at once handsome and unusual, like himself. If I could think of anybody—but what's the good, when the whole thing's impossible? Nobody knows who did it. Nobody knows how it could be done. At least there's only one exception I'd make, and that's why I really mentioned the whole thing. The dog knows."

Father Brown sighed and then said absently: "You were there as a friend of young Donald, weren't you? He didn't go on your walk with you?"

"No," replied Fiennes smiling. "The young scoundrel had gone to bed that morning and got up that afternoon. I went with his cousins, two young officers from India, and our conversation was trivial enough. I remember the elder, whose name I think is Herbert Druce and who is an authority on horse-breeding, talked about nothing but a mare he had bought and the moral character of the man who sold her; while his brother Harry seemed to be brooding on his bad luck at Monte Carlo. I only mention it to show you, in the light of what happened on

our walk, that there was nothing psychic about us. The dog was the only mystic in our company."

"What sort of a dog was he?" asked the priest.

"Same breed as that one," answered Fiennes. "That's what started me off on the story, your saying you didn't believe in believing in a dog. He's a big black retriever named Nox, and a suggestive name too; for I think what he did a darker mystery than the murder. You know Druce's house and garden are by the sea; we walked about a mile from it along the sands and then turned back, going the other way. We passed a rather curious rock called the Rock of Fortune, famous in the neighborhood because it's one of those examples of one stone barely balanced on another, so that a touch would knock it over. It is not really very high, but the hanging outline of it makes it look a little wild and sinister; at least it made it look so to me, for I don't imagine my jolly young companions were afflicted with the picturesque. But it may be that I was beginning to feel an atmosphere; for just then the question arose of whether it was time to go back to tea, and even then I think I had a premonition that time counted for a good deal in the business. Neither Herbert Druce nor I had a watch, so we called out to his brother, who was some paces behind, having stopped to light his pipe under the hedge. Hence it happened that he shouted out the hour, which was twenty past four, in his big voice through the growing twilight; and somehow the loudness of it made it sound like the proclamation of something tremendous. His unconsciousness seemed to make it all the more so; but that was always the way with omens; and particular ticks of the clock were really very ominous things that afternoon. According to Dr. Valentine's testimony, poor Druce had actually died just about half-past four.

"Well, they said we needn't go home for ten minutes, and we walked a little farther along the sands, doing nothing in particular—throwing stones for the dog and throwing sticks into the sea for him to swim after. But to me the twilight seemed to grow oddly oppressive and the very shadow of the top-heavy Rock of Fortune lay on me like a load. And then the curious thing happened. Nox had just brought back Herbert's walking-stick out of the sea and his brother had thrown his in also. The dog swam out again, but just about what must have been the stroke of the half-hour, he stopped swimming. He came back again on to the shore and stood in front of us. Then he sud-

denly threw up his head and sent up a howl or wail of woe, if ever I heard one in the world.

"'What the devil's the matter with the dog?' asked Herbert; but none of us could answer. There was a long silence after the brute's wailing and whining died away on the desolate shore; and then the silence was broken. As I live, it was broken by a faint and far-off shriek, like the shriek of a woman from beyond the hedges inland. We didn't know what it was then; but we knew afterwards. It was the cry the girl gave when she first saw the body of her father."

"You went back, I suppose," said Father Brown patiently. "What happened then?"

"I'll tell you what happened then," said Fiennes with a grim emphasis. "When we got back into that garden the first thing we saw was Traill the lawyer; I can see him now with his black hat and black whiskers relieved against the perspective of the blue flowers stretching down to the summer-house, with the sunset and the strange outline of the Rock of Fortune in the distance. His face and figure were in shadow against the sunset; but I swear the white teeth were showing in his head and he was smiling.

"The moment Nox saw that man, the dog dashed forward and stood in the middle of the path barking at him madly, murderously, volleying out curses that were almost verbal in their dreadful distinctness of hatred. And the man doubled up and fled along the path between the flowers."

Father Brown sprang to his feet with a startling impatience.

"So the dog denounced him, did he?" he cried. "The oracle of the dog condemned him. Did you see what birds were flying, and are you sure whether they were on the right hand or the left? Did you consult the augurs about the sacrifices? Surely you didn't omit to cut open the dog and examine his entrails. That is the sort of scientific test you heathen humanitarians seem to trust when you are thinking of taking away the life and honor of a man."

Fiennes sat gaping for an instant before he found breath to say, "Why, what's the matter with you? What have I done now?"

A sort of anxiety came back into the priest's eyes—the anxiety of a man who has run against a post in the dark and wonders for a moment whether he has hurt it.

"I'm most awfully sorry," he said with sincere distress. "I beg your pardon for being so rude; pray forgive me."

Fiennes looked at him curiously. "I sometimes think you are more of a mystery than any of the mysteries," he said. "But anyhow, if you don't believe in the mystery of the dog, at least you can't get over the mystery of the man. You can't deny that at the very moment when the beast came back from the sea and bellowed, his master's soul was driven out of his body by the blow of some unseen power that no mortal man can trace or even imagine. And as for the lawyer, I don't go only by the dog; there are other curious details too. He struck me as a smooth, smiling, equivocal sort of person; and one of his tricks seemed like a sort of hint. You know the doctor and the police were on the spot very quickly; Valentine was brought back when walking away from the house, and he telephoned instantly. That, with the secluded house, small numbers, and enclosed space, made it pretty possible to search everybody who could have been near; and everybody was thoroughly searched—for a weapon. The whole house, garden, and shore were combed for a weapon. The disappearance of the dagger is almost as crazy as the disappearance of the man."

"The disappearance of the dagger," said Father Brown, nodding. He seemed to have become suddenly attentive.

"Well," continued Fiennes, "I told you that man Traill had a trick of fidgeting with his tie and tie-pin—especially his tie-pin. His pin, like himself, was at once showy and old-fashioned. It had one of those stones with concentric colored rings that look like an eye; and his own concentration on it got on my nerves, as if he had been a Cyclops with one eye in the middle of his body. But the pin was not only large but long; and it occurred to me that his anxiety about its adjustment was because it was even longer than it looked; as long as a stiletto in fact."

Father Brown nodded thoughtfully. "Was any other instrument ever suggested?" he asked.

"There was another suggestion," answered Fiennes, "from one of the young Druces—the cousins, I mean. Neither Herbert nor Harry Druce would have struck one at first as likely to be of assistance in scientific detection; but while Herbert was really the traditional type of heavy Dragoon, caring for nothing but horses and being an ornament to the Horse Guards, his younger brother Harry had been in the Indian Police and knew something about such things. Indeed in his own way he was quite

clever; and I rather fancy he had been too clever; I mean he had left the police through breaking some red-tape regulations and taking some sort of risk and responsibility of his own. Anyhow, he was in some sense a detective out of work, and threw himself into this business with more than the ardor of an amateur. And it was with him that I had an argument about the weapon—an argument that led to something new. It began by his countering my description of the dog barking at Traill; and he said that a dog at his worst couldn't bark, but growled."

"He was quite right there," observed the priest.

"'This young fellow went on to say that, if it came to that, he'd heard Nox growling at other people before then; and among others at Floyd the secretary. I retorted that his own argument answered itself; for the crime couldn't be brought home to two or three people, and least of all to Floyd, who was as innocent as a harum-scarum schoolboy, and had been seen by everybody all the time perched above the garden hedge with his fan of red hair as conspicuous as a scarlet cuckatoo. 'I know there's difficulties anyhow,' said my colleague, 'but I wish you'd come with me down the garden a minute. I want to show you something I don't think anyone else has seen.' This was on the very day of the discovery, and the garden was just as it had been: the step-ladder was still standing by the hedge, and just under the hedge my guide stooped and disentangled something from the deep grass. It was the shears used for clipping the hedge, and on the point of one of them was a smear of blood."

There was a short silence, and then Father Brown said suddenly, "What was the lawyer there for?"

"He told us the Colonel sent for him to alter his will," answered Fiennes. "And, by the way, there was another thing about the business of the will that I ought to mention. You see, the will wasn't actually signed in the summer-house that afternoon."

"I suppose not," said Father Brown; "there would have to be two witnesses."

"The lawyer actually came down the day before and it was signed then; but he was sent for again next day because the old man had a doubt about one of the witnesses and had to be reassured."

"Who were the witnesses?" asked Father Brown.

"That's just the point," replied his informant eagerly, "the witnesses were Floyd the secretary and this Dr. Valentine, the

foreign sort of surgeon or whatever he is; and the two have a quarrel. Now I'm bound to say that the secretary is something of a busybody. He's one of those hot and headlong people whose warmth of temperament has unfortunately turned mostly to pugnacity and bristling suspicion; to distrusting people instead of to trusting them. That sort of red-haired red-hot fellow is always either universally credulous or universally incredulous; and sometimes both. He was not only a Jack of all trades, but he knew better than all tradesmen. He not only knew everything, but he warned everybody against everybody. All that must be taken into account in his suspicions about Valentine; but in that particular case there seems to have been something behind it. He said the name of Valentine was not really Valentine. He said he had seen him elsewhere known by the name of De Villon. He said it would invalidate the will; of course he was kind enough to explain to the lawyer what the law was on that point. They were both in a frightful wax."

Father Brown laughed. "People often are when they are to witness a will," he said, "for one thing, it means that they can't have any legacy under it. But what did Dr. Valentine say? No doubt the universal secretary knew more about the doctor's name than the doctor did. But even the doctor might have some information about his own name."

Fiennes paused a moment before he replied.

"Dr. Valentine took it in a curious way. Dr. Valentine is a curious man. His appearance is rather striking but very foreign. He is young but wears a beard cut square; and his face is very pale, dreadfully pale and dreadfully serious. His eyes have a sort of ache in them, as if he ought to wear glasses or had given himself a headache with thinking; but he is quite handsome and always very formally dressed, with a top hat and a dark coat and a little red rosette. His manner is rather cold and haughty, and he has a way of staring at you which is very disconcerting. When thus charged with having changed his name, he merely stared like a sphinx and then said with a little laugh that he supposed Americans had no names to change. At that I think the Colonel also got into a fuss and said all sorts of angry things to the doctor; all the more angry because of the doctor's pretensions to a future place in his family. But I shouldn't have thought much of that but for a few words that I happened to hear later, early in the afternoon of the tragedy. I don't want to make a lot of them, for they weren't the sort of

words on which one would like, in the ordinary way, to play the eavesdropper. As I was passing out towards the front gate with my two companions and the dog, I heard voices which told me that Dr. Valentine and Miss Druce had withdrawn for a moment into the shadow of the house, in an angle behind a row of flowering plants, and were talking to each other in passionate whisperings—sometimes almost like hissings; for it was something of a lovers' quarrel as well as a lovers' tryst. Nobody repeats the sort of things they said for the most part; but in an unfortunate business like this I'm bound to say that there was repeated more than once a phrase about killing somebody. In fact, the girl seemed to be begging him not to kill somebody, or saying that no provocation could justify killing anybody; which seems an unusual sort of talk to address to a gentleman who has dropped in to tea."

"Do you know," asked the priest, "whether Dr. Valentine seemed to be very angry after the scene with the secretary and the Colonel—I mean about witnessing the will?"

"By all accounts," replied the other, "he wasn't half so angry as the secretary was. It was the secretary who went away raging after witnessing the will."

"And now," said Father Brown, "what about the will itself?"

"The Colonel was a very wealthy man, and his will was important. Traill wouldn't tell us the alteration at that stage, but I have since heard, only this morning in fact, that most of the money was transferred from the son to the daughter. I told you that Druce was wild with my friend Donald over his dissipated hours."

"The question of motive has been rather over-shadowed by the question of method," observed Father Brown thoughtfully. "At that moment, apparently, Miss Druce was the immediate gainer by the death."

"Good God! What a cold-blooded way of talking," cried Fiennes, staring at him. "You don't really mean to hint that she——"

"Is she going to marry that Dr. Valentine?" asked the other.

"Some people are against it," answered his friend. "But he is liked and respected in the place and is a skilled and devoted surgeon."

"So devoted a surgeon," said Father Brown, "that he had

surgical instruments with him when he went to call on the young lady at tea-time. For he must have used a lancet or something, and he never seems to have gone home."

Fiennes sprang to his feet and looked at him in a heat of inquiry. "You suggest he might have used the very same lancet——"

Father Brown shook his head. "All these suggestions are fancies just now," he said. "The problem is not who did it or what did it, but how it was done. We might find many men and even many tools—pins and shears and lancets. But how did a man get into the room? How did even a pin get into it?"

He was staring reflectively at the ceiling as he spoke, but as he said the last words his eye cocked in an alert fashion as if he had suddenly seen a curious fly on the ceiling.

"Well, what would you do about it?" asked the young man. "You have a lot of experience, what would you advise now?"

"I'm afraid I'm not much use," said Father Brown with a sigh. "I can't suggest very much without having ever been near the place or the people. For the moment you can only go on with local inquiries. I gather that your friend from the Indian Police is more or less in charge of your inquiry down there. I should run down and see how he is getting on. See what he's been doing in the way of amateur detection. There may be news already."

As his guests, the biped and the quadruped, disappeared, Father Brown took up his pen and went back to his interrupted occupation of planning a course of lectures on the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. The subject was a large one and he had to re-cast it more than once, so that he was somewhat similarly employed some two days later when the big black dog again came bounding into the room and sprawled all over him with enthusiasm and excitement. The master who followed the dog shared the excitement if not the enthusiasm. He had been excited in a less pleasant fashion, for his blue eyes seemed to start from his head and his eager face was even a little pale.

"You told me," he said abruptly and without preface, "to find out what Harry Druce was doing. Do you know what he's done?"

The priest did not reply, and the young man went on in jerky tones:

"I'll tell you what he's done. He's killed himself."

Father Brown's lips moved only faintly, and there was nothing practical about what he was saying—nothing that had anything to do with this story or this world.

"You give me the creeps sometimes," said Fiennes. "Did you—did you expect this?"

"I thought it possible," said Father Brown; "that was why I asked you to go and see what he was doing. I hoped you might not be too late."

"It was I who found him," said Fiennes rather huskily. "It was the ugliest and most uncanny thing I ever knew. I went down that old garden again and I knew there was something new and unnatural about it besides the murder. The flowers still tossed about in blue masses on each side of the black entrance into the old gray summer-house; but to me the blue flowers looked like blue devils dancing before some dark cavern of the underworld. I looked all around; everything seemed to be in its ordinary place. But the queer notion grew on me that there was something wrong with the very shape of the sky. And then I saw what it was. The Rock of Fortune always rose in the background beyond the garden hedge and against the sea. And the Rock of Fortune was gone."

Father Brown had lifted his head and was listening intently.

"It was as if a mountain had walked away out of a landscape or a moon fallen from the sky; though I knew, of course, that a touch at any time would have tipped the thing over. Something possessed me and I rushed down that garden path like the wind and went crashing through that hedge as if it were a spider's web. It was a thin hedge really, though its undisturbed trimness had made it serve all the purposes of a wall. On the shore I found the loose rock fallen from its pedestal; and poor Harry Druce lay like a wreck underneath it. One arm was thrown round it in a sort of embrace as if he had pulled it down on himself; and on the broad brown sands beside it, in large crazy lettering, he had scrawled the words, "The Rock of Fortune falls on the Fool."

"It was the Colonel's will that did that," observed Father Brown. "The young man had staked everything on profiting himself by Donald's disgrace, especially when his uncle sent for him on the same day as the lawyer, and welcomed him with so much warmth. Otherwise he was done; he'd lost his police job; he was beggared at Monte Carlo. And he killed himself when he found he'd killed his kinsman for nothing."

"Here, stop a minute!" cried the staring Fiennes. "You're going too fast for me."

"Talking about the will, by the way," continued Father Brown calmly, "before I forget it, or we go on to bigger things, there was a simple explanation, I think, of all that business about the doctor's name. I rather fancy I have heard both names before somewhere. The doctor is really a French nobleman with the title of the Marquis de Villon. But he is also an ardent Republican and has abandoned his title and fallen back on the forgotten family surname. 'With your Citizen Riquetti you have puzzled Europe for ten days.'"

"What is that?" asked the young man blankly.

"Never mind," said the priest. "Nine times out of ten it is a rascally thing to change one's name; but this was a piece of fine fanaticism. That's the point of his sarcasm about Americans having no names—that is, no titles. Now in England the Marquis of Hartington is never called Mr. Hartington; but in France the Marquis de Villon is called M. de Villon. So it might well look like a change of name. As for the talk about killing, I fancy that also was a point of French etiquette. The doctor was talking about challenging Floyd to a duel, and the girl was trying to dissuade him."

"Oh, I *see*," cried Fiennes slowly. "Now I understand what she meant."

"And what is that about?" asked his companion, smiling.

"Well," said the young man, "it was something that happened to me just before I found that poor fellow's body; only the catastrophe drove it out of my head. I suppose it's hard to remember a little romantic idyll when you've just come on top of a tragedy. But as I went down the lanes leading to the Colonel's old place, I met his daughter walking with Dr. Valentine. She was in mourning of course, and he always wore black as if he were going to a funeral; but I can't say that their faces were very funereal. Never have I seen two people looking in their own way more respectably radiant and cheerful. They stopped and saluted me and then she told me they were married and living in a little house on the outskirts of the town, where the doctor was continuing his practise. This rather surprised me, because I knew that her old father's will had left her his property; and I hinted at it delicately by saying I was going along to her father's old place and had half expected to meet her there. But she only laughed and said, "Oh, we've given up all that. My

husband doesn't like heiresses." And I discovered with some astonishment they really had insisted on restoring the property to poor Donald; so I hope he's had a healthy shock and will treat it sensibly. There was never much really the matter with him; he was very young and his father was not very wise. But it was in connection with that that she said something I didn't understand at the time; but now I'm sure it must be as you say. She said with a sort of sudden and splendid arrogance that was entirely altruistic:

"'I hope it'll stop that red-haired fool from fussing any more about the will. Does he think my husband, who has given up a crest and a coronet as old as the Crusades for his principles, would kill an old man in a summer-house for a legacy like that?' Then she laughed again and said, 'My husband isn't killing anybody except in the way of business. Why, he didn't even ask his friends to call on the secretary.' Now, of course, I see what she meant."

"I see part of what she meant, of course," said Father Brown. "What did she mean exactly by the secretary fussing about the will?"

Fiennes smiled as he answered. "I wish you knew the secretary, Father Brown. It would be a joy to you to watch him make things hum, as he calls it. He made the house of mourning hum. He filled the funeral with all the snap and zip of the brightest sporting event. There was no holding him, after something had really happened. I've told you how he used to oversee the gardener as he did the garden, and how he instructed the lawyer in the law. Needless to say, he also instructed the surgeon in the practise of surgery; and as the surgeon was Dr. Valentine, you may be sure it ended in accusing him of something worse than bad surgery. The secretary got it fixed in his red head that the doctor had committed the crime; and when the police arrived he was perfectly sublime. Need I say that he became on the spot the greatest of all amateur detectives? Sherlock Holmes never towered over Scotland Yard with more Titanic intellectual pride and scorn than Colonel Druce's private secretary over the police investigating Colonel Druce's death. I tell you it was a joy to see him. He strode about with an abstracted air, tossing his scarlet crest of hair and giving curt impatient replies. Of course it was his demeanor during these days that made Druce's daughter so wild with him. Of course he had a theory. It's just the sort of

theory a man would have in a book; and Floyd is the sort of man who ought to be in a book. He'd be better fun and less bother in a book."

"What was his theory?" asked the other.

"Oh, it was full of pep," replied Fiennes gloomily. "It would have been glorious copy if it could have held together for ten minutes longer. He said the Colonel was still alive when they found him in the summer-house and the doctor killed him with the surgical instrument on pretense of cutting the clothes."

"I see," said the priest. "I suppose he was lying flat on his face on the mud floor as a form of siesta."

"It's wonderful what hustle will do," continued his informant. "I believe Floyd would have got his great theory into the papers at any rate, and perhaps had the doctor arrested, when all these things were blown sky high as if by dynamite by the discovery of that dead body lying under the Rock of Fortune. And that's what we come back to after all. I suppose the suicide is almost a confession. But nobody will ever know the whole story."

There was a silence, and then the priest said modestly, "I rather think I know the whole story."

Fiennes stared. "But look here," he cried, "how do you come to know the whole story, or to be sure it's the true story? You've been sitting here a hundred miles away writing a sermon; do you mean to tell me you really know what happened already? If you've really come to the end, where in the world do you begin? What started you off with your own story?"

Father Brown jumped up with a very unusual excitement and his first exclamation was like an explosion.

"The dog!" he cried. "The dog, of course! You had the whole story in your hands in the business of the dog on the beach, if you'd only noticed the dog properly."

Fiennes stared still more. "But you told me before that my feelings about the dog were all nonsense, and the dog had nothing to do with it."

"The dog had everything to do with it," said Father Brown, "as you'd have found out if you'd only treated the dog as a dog and not as God Almighty judging the souls of men."

He paused in an embarrassed way for a moment, and then said, with a rather pathetic air of apology:

"The truth is, I happen to be awfully fond of dogs. And it seemed to me that in all this lurid halo of dog superstitions

nobody was really thinking about the poor dog at all. To begin with a small point, about his barking at the lawyer or growling at the secretary. You asked how I could guess things a hundred miles away; but honestly it's mostly to your credit, for you described people so well that I know the types. A man like Traill who frowns usually and smiles suddenly, a man who fiddles with things, especially at his throat, is a nervous, easily embarrassed man. I shouldn't wonder if Floyd, the efficient secretary, is nervy and jumpy too; those Yankee hustlers often are. Otherwise he wouldn't have cut his fingers on the shears and dropped them when he heard Janet Druce scream.

"Now dogs hate nervous people. I don't know whether they make the dog nervous too; or whether, being after all a brute, he is a bit of bully; or whether his canine vanity (which is colossal) is simply offended at not being liked. But anyhow there was nothing in poor Nox protesting against those people, except that he disliked them for being afraid of him. Now I know you're awfully clever, and nobody of sense sneers at cleverness. But I sometimes fancy, for instance, that you are too clever to understand animals. Sometimes you are too clever to understand men, especially when they act almost as simply as animals. Animals are very literal; they live in a world of truisms. Take this case; a dog barks at a man and a man runs away from a dog. Now you do not seem to be quite simple enough to see the fact; that the dog barked because he disliked the man and the man fled because he was frightened of the dog. They had no other motives and they needed none. But you must read psychological mysteries into it and suppose the dog had super-normal vision, and was a mysterious mouthpiece of doom. You must suppose the man was running away, not from the dog but from the hangman. And yet, if you come to think of it, all this deeper psychology is exceedingly improbable. If the dog really could completely and consciously realize the murderer of his master, he wouldn't stand yapping as he might at a curate at a tea-party; he's much more likely to fly at his throat. And on the other hand, do you really think a man who had hardened his heart to murder an old friend and then walk about smiling at the old friend's family, under the eyes of his old friend's daughter and postmortem doctor—do you think a man like that would be doubled up by mere remorse because a dog barked? He might feel the tragic irony of it; it might shake his soul, like any other tragic trifle. But he wouldn't

rush madly the length of a garden to escape from the only witness whom he knew to be unable to talk. People have a panic like that when they are frightened, not of tragic ironies, but of teeth. The whole thing is simpler than you can understand.

"But when we come to that business by the seashore, things are much more interesting. As you stated then, they were much more puzzling. I didn't understand that tale of the dog going in and out of the water; it didn't seem to me a doggy thing to do. If Nox had been very much upset about something else, he might possibly have refused to go after the stick at all. He'd probably go off nosing in whatever direction he suspected the mischief. But when once a dog is actually chasing a thing, a stone or a stick or a rabbit, my experience is that he won't stop for anything but the most peremptory command, and not always for that. That he should turn around because his mood changed seems to me unthinkable."

"But he did turn around," insisted Fiennes, "and came back without the stick."

"He came back without the stick for the best reason in the world," replied the priest. "He came back because he couldn't find it. He whined because he couldn't find it. That's the sort of thing a dog really does whine about. A dog is a devil of a ritualist. He is as particular about the precise routine of a game as a child about the precise repetition of a fairy-tale. In this case something had gone wrong with the game. He came back to complain seriously of the conduct of the stick. Never had such a thing happened before. Never had an eminent and distinguished dog been so treated by a rotten old walking-stick."

"Why, what had the walking-stick done?" inquired the young man.

"It had sunk," said Father Brown.

Fiennes said nothing, but continued to stare, and it was the priest who continued:

"It had sunk because it was not really a stick, but a rod of steel with a very thin shell of cane and a sharp point. In other words, it was a sword-stick. I suppose a murderer never got rid of a bloody weapon so oddly and yet so naturally as by throwing it into the sea for a retriever."

"I begin to see what you mean," admitted Fiennes; "but even if a sword-stick was used, I have no guess of how it was used."

"I had a sort of guess," said Father Brown, "right at the beginning when you said the word summer-house. And another when you said that Druce wore a white coat. As long as everybody was looking for a short dagger, nobody thought of it; but if we admit a rather long blade like a rapier, it's not so impossible."

He was leaning back, looking at the ceiling, and began like one going back to his own first thoughts and fundamentals.

"All that discussion about detective stories like the Yellow Room, about a man found dead in sealed chambers which no one could enter, does not apply to the present case, because it is a summer-house. When we talk of a Yellow Room, or any room, we imply walls that are really homogeneous and impenetrable. But a summer-house is not made like that; it is often made, as it was in this case, of closely interlaced but still separate boughs and strips of wood, in which there are chinks here and there. There was one of them just behind Druce's back as he sat in his chair up against the wall. But just as the room was a summer-house, so the chair was a basket-chair. That also was a lattice of loopholes. Lastly, the summer-house was close up under the hedge; and you have just told me that it was really a thin hedge. A man standing outside it could easily see, amid a network of twigs and branches and canes, one white spot of the Colonel's coat as plain as the white of a target.

"Now, you left the geography a little vague; but it was possible to put two and two together. You said the Rock of Fortune was not really high; but you also said it could be seen dominating the garden like a mountain-peak. In other words, it was very near the end of the garden, though your walk had taken you a long way round to it. Also, it isn't likely the young lady really howled so as to be heard half a mile. She gave an ordinary involuntary cry, and yet you heard it on the shore. And among other interesting things that you told me, may I remind you that you said Harry Druce had fallen behind to light his pipe under a hedge."

Fiennes shuddered slightly. "You mean he drew his blade there and sent it through the hedge at the white spot. But surely it was a very odd chance and a very sudden choice. Besides, he couldn't be certain the old man's money had passed to him, and as a fact it hadn't."

Father Brown's face became animated.

"You misunderstand the man's character," he said, as if he

himself had known the man all his life. "A curious but not unknown type of character. If he had really *known* the money would come to him, I seriously believe he wouldn't have done it. He would have seen it as the dirty thing it was."

"Isn't that rather paradoxical?" asked the other.

"This man was a gambler," said the priest, "and a man in disgrace for having taken risks and anticipated orders. It was probably for something pretty unscrupulous, for every imperial police is more like a Russian secret police than we like to think. But he had gone beyond the line and failed. Now, the temptation of that type of man is to do a mad thing precisely because the risk will be wonderful in retrospect. He wants to say, 'Nobody but I could have seized that chance or seen that it was then or never. What a wild and wonderful guess it was, when I put all those things together; Donald in disgrace; and the lawyer being sent for; and Herbert and I sent for at the same time—and then nothing more but the way the old man grinned at me and shook hands. Anybody would say I was mad to risk it; but that is how fortunes are made, by the man mad enough to have a little foresight.' In short, it is the vanity of guessing. It is the megalomania of the gambler. The more incongruous the coincidence, the more instantaneous the decision, the more likely he is to snatch the chance. The accident, the very triviality, of the white speck and the hole in the hedge intoxicated him like a vision of the world's desire. Nobody clever enough to see such a combination of accidents could be cowardly enough not to use them! That is how the devil talks to the gambler. But the devil himself would hardly have induced that unhappy man to go down in a dull, deliberate way and kill an old uncle from whom he'd always had expectations. It would be too respectable."

He paused a moment; and then went on with a certain quiet emphasis.

"And now try to call up the scene, even as you saw it yourself. As he stood there, dizzy with his diabolical opportunity, he looked up and saw that strange outline that might have been the image of his own tottering soul; the one great crag poised perilously on the other like a pyramid on its point and remembered that it was called the Rock of Fortune. Can you guess how such a man at such a moment would read such a signal? I think it strung him up to action and even to vigilance. He who would be a tower must not fear to be a toppling

tower. Anyhow, he acted; his next difficulty was to cover his tracks. To be found with a sword-stick, let alone a blood-stained sword-stick, would be fatal in the search that was certain to follow. If he left it anywhere, it would be found and probably traced. Even if he threw it into the sea the action might be noticed, and thought noticeable—unless indeed he could think of some more natural way of covering the action. As you know, he did think of one, and a very good one. Being the only one of you with a watch, he told you it was not yet time to return, strolled a little farther and started the game of throwing in sticks for the retriever. But how his eyes must have rolled darkly over all that desolate seashore before they alighted on the dog!"

Fiennes nodded, gazing thoughtfully into space. His mind seemed to have drifted back to a less practical part of the narrative.

"It's queer," he said, "that the dog really was in the story after all."

"The dog could almost have told you the story, if he could talk," said the priest. "All I complain of is that because he couldn't talk, you made up his story for him, and made him talk with the tongues of men and angels. It's part of something I've noticed more and more in the modern world, appearing in all sorts of newspaper rumors and conversational catch-words; something that's arbitrary without being authoritative. People readily swallow the untested claims of this, that, or the other. It's drowning all your old rationalism and scepticism, it's coming in like a sea; and the name of it is superstition." He stood up abruptly, his face heavy with a sort of frown, and went on talking almost as if he were alone. "It's the first effect of not believing in God that you lose your common sense, and can't see things as they are. Anything that anybody talks about, and says there's a good deal in it, extends itself indefinitely like a vista in a nightmare. And a dog is an omen and a cat is a mystery and a pig is a mascot and a beetle is a scarab, calling up all the menagerie of polytheism from Egypt and old India; Dog Anubis and great green-eyed Pasht and all the holy howling Bulls of Bashan; reeling back to the bestial gods of the beginning, escaping into elephants and snakes and crocodiles; and all because you are frightened of four words: 'He was made Man.'"

The young man got up with a little embarrassment, almost as

if he had overheard a soliloquy. He called to the dog and left the room with vague but breezy farewells. But he had to call the dog twice, for the dog had remained behind quite motionless for a moment, looking up steadily at Father Brown as the wolf looked at St. Francis.

THE MURDER IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOR

J. S. Fletcher *was born at Halifax in 1863. His father was the Rev. John Fletcher. He was educated at Silcoates School and privately; and contributed extensively to the Leeds "Mercury," the "Star," "Vanity Fair" and the "Daily Mail," under the pseudonym of "A Son of the Soil." He was the assistant leader-writer for the Leeds "Mercury" from 1893 to 1898, and was the special correspondent for the Yorkshire "Post" in 1902. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.*

Fletcher's early books were romantic: he is the author of "When Charles the First Was King" (1892), "Mistress Spitfire" (1896), "The Making of Matthias" (1897), "The Threshing Floor" (1907), "Daniel Quayne" (1907), and "The Harvest Moon" (1908). He has also written "A Picturesque History of Yorkshire," in three volumes, "The History of the St. Leger Stakes," "A Book about Yorkshire," "The Making of Modern Yorkshire," "The Cistercians in Yorkshire," and "The Reformation of Northern England."

Fletcher has written over thirty detective novels—a list which includes "The Middle Temple Murder" (1918), "The Tallyrand Maxim" (1920), "Scarhaven Keep" (1920), "The Root of All Evil" (1921), "The Orange-Yellow Diamond" (1921), "The Raynor-Slade Amalgamation" (1922), "The Charing Cross Mystery" (1923), "The Mazaroff Mystery" (1924), "The Safety Pin" (1924), "False Scent" (1925), "The Cartright Gardens Murder" (1926), and "The Mortover Grange Affair" (1927).

The story, "The Murder in the Mayor's Parlor," reprinted here, is taken from a volume of short stories entitled "The Secret of the Barbican."

THE MURDER IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOR

By J. S. Fletcher

I

The London express, stopping for a bare minute in the little station of Lyncaster, set down a single passenger, a quietly-dressed, middle-aged, spectacled man, whom casual observers, had they looked at him at all, would have taken for a member of the professional classes, a doctor, a solicitor, a chartered accountant. The few people on the platform paid no attention to him; within a moment of his arrival he had given up his ticket, passed through the booking-office, and was rapidly walking up the road to the town,—a collection of ancient houses set on the ridge of a low hill, from the crown of which two objects—the high roof of the old Moot Hall and the square tower of the parish church—stood out prominently against the glow of the December sunset. Within five minutes he was in the heart of the town—a market-place which looked, at first glance and in that uncertain light, as if nothing had altered in it since the Middle Ages. Gabled and timbered houses, diamond-paned windows, queer chimney-stacks, a pavement of cobble-stones, a pillared and canopied market cross, the old church at one end, the Moot Hall at the other—these things seemed to make up the whole of Lyncaster, save for a few narrow and equally ancient streets which opened out of the square at various unexpected angles. It needed but one sharp, shrewd glance on the part of the stranger to see that he was now in the midst of one of those antique English boroughs which are becoming rarer with every generation, and wherein life apparently still takes its tone and color from the past.

But the man from London wasted no time in looking around. His quick eyes had at once fallen on two words painted on a projecting lamp, and thrown into prominence by the flare of a gas-jet. Those two words were Police Station—he made for the

door beneath them, as a business-like man makes for the object which demands his immediate attention. The door was half open; within, in a barely furnished office, hung about with official-looking papers and bills, a sleepy-looking young constable was writing at a stand-up desk. He lifted his face—the face of a rustic promoted from the plow—and opened his mouth as if to signify that his ears were also open.

"Superintendent Sutton in?" asked the stranger. "Then tell him, if you please, that Detective-Sergeant Milgrave, from New Scotland Yard, is here."

The constable, awed to silence by this announcement, took one hasty glance at the London detective, and lumbered into an inner room. He muttered his news to some person who sat within, then turned and beckoned. Milgrave walked sharply forward, to be met by a big, burly man, who held out a stout fist, and showed unmistakable pleasure and relief at his visitor's coming.

"I'm right glad to see you, sir," he said, pulling forward an elbow-chair to the edge of a blazing fire. "We're not much used to this sort of thing in these parts, you know, and we want a Londoner to take a look in at this affair. I suppose," he went on, motioning Milgrave to seat himself—"I suppose you'll have heard the facts of the case—read 'em in the newspapers, of course?"

"No!" answered Milgrave. He set down his suitcase, unbuttoned his overcoat, and took a seat. "No! I know nothing, except that there's been a murder here, and that I'm sent down, at your request, to help to investigate it. I saw headlines in the papers, certainly, but I didn't read what was underneath them. I don't know anything. That's my way, superintendent—I like my facts at first hand. And so you'll perhaps tell me all about it, at once."

"You wouldn't like to take something, first?" asked the superintendent, with rural solicitude. "It's a long journey, and——"

"No, thank you—business first," responded Milgrave. "Let me know what's been done, and what's to be done, first of all. I'll see to myself when I'm posted up. Tell me all you can."

The superintendent, a bluff, hearty-looking individual, who obviously felt great interest in the personality of this man from the Criminal Investigation Department, drew his own chair to the fire, and shook his head as he dropped into it.

"It's a queer do—as we say in these parts," he remarked.

"I never heard of a queerer, and I've been thirty and odd years in the force, Mr. Milgrave. Well, I'm a poor hand at telling a tale, but I'll put it to you in as good order as I can. Now, then, to be what we may term systematic about it, this is Thursday, December 10, 1914, isn't it? Very well, on the night of day before yesterday—Tuesday, December 8—our young mayor, Mr. Guy Hannington, came into the Moot Hall by the front entrance, out of the market-place, and went up to the mayor's parlor. That was at half-past eight o'clock. The person—the only person—who saw him come in was the caretaker, Learoyd, a pensioned policeman. Learoyd and his wife live in the ground floor rooms of the Moot Hall—you can't enter at all from the front without passing their door and window, as I shall show you presently. Learoyd was standing at his door when his worship came in at the entry, and he asked him if there was aught he could do. His worship said no; he was only going up to the mayor's parlor to look at some papers. He went up, and Learoyd and his wife sat down to their supper.

"A good hour passed; Learoyd remarked to his missis that his worship was stopping upstairs a longish time. Then he went out into the entry and smoked his pipe a bit, expecting the mayor to come down. But he didn't come, and didn't come, and it got to ten o'clock, which is Learoyd's time for locking all up. So, after a while, Learoyd got uneasy, and he went upstairs and listened at the door. He heard naught—no moving about, nothing. So at last he knocked—and got no answer. Then he opened the door. And he saw at once that something was wrong, for there was the poor young gentleman lying across the hearthrug, between his desk and the fireplace, arms stretched out, and as still as could be!"

"Dead?" asked Milgrave.

"Dead as a door-nail, sir!" replied the superintendent. "There was no doubt of that. Learoyd just took one look at him—he was lying on his back, and the light was full on—and then he hurried down for his wife, and sent her for Dr. Winford, who lives in the market-place, and for me—I live just round the corner. Dr. Winford and me got there together. The doctor just looked him over and said he'd been dead quite an hour. And as to how he'd come by his death, he'd been stabbed!"

"Stabbed, eh?" remarked Milgrave. "Stabbed!"

"Stabbed through the heart," said the superintendent. "And," he continued, with a significant shake of the head,

"from the back. Dr. Winford, he says that the mayor had been writing, or was writing, at his desk when the murderer drove a knife, or something of that sort, clean through his heart from behind. He says—the doctor—that he'd leap up, throw out his arms, twist round, and fall where he was found, on his back. He says, too, that death would be practically instantaneous."

"Learoyd never heard anything—no sound of a fall, or a cry?" asked Milgrave.

"Nothing! But you've got to remember that our Moot Hall is one of the very oldest buildings in England," answered the superintendent. "You'll see for yourself that the walls and floors are of a tremendous thickness—eight to twelve feet thick in places. No, Learoyd had heard nothing. And there were no signs of any struggle. Everything was in its place. His worship had begun a letter—written the date, and 'My dear sir.' That and an agenda-paper for the next council meeting were on his blotting-paper; his pen was on the floor. There wasn't a sign that anybody but himself had been in the room. And Learoyd had never seen or heard anybody go up there after the Mayor."

"Still, somebody could have gone up?" suggested Milgrave.

"Might have gone up while Learoyd and his wife were at their supper," assented the superintendent. "But it's unlikely—at least, at first sight—for, as you'll see, there's a big glass panel in their door, through which you can see the staircase, and Learoyd sat facing it while he was at table. We can't hear of anybody who saw a soul enter or leave between half-past eight and ten o'clock. Still, there must have been somebody—the murderer—because there's no other entrance."

"No back entrance?" observed Milgrave.

"Not at that hour. The back entrance is closed at six, when the clerks go away," replied the superintendent. "No; whoever did it must have slipped in very quietly, just when Learoyd happened to have his back turned, and have got out again in the same fashion."

"Suspect anyone?" asked Milgrave.

"Why," answered the superintendent, with a deprecating laugh, as if the suggestion was not worthy of mention, "there is some talk in the town about an Italian chap, a sort of showman, who got into trouble here some few months since. Mr. Hannington was the magistrate who sent him to prison, and the fellow was understood to make a threat against him. Of course, we're trying to trace the man, but——"

"Just tell me about the mayor," interrupted Milgrave. "We'll leave the Italian. Who was the mayor? How long had he been mayor? Was he popular, or disliked? Had he any enemies in the town, or elsewhere? Give me any details, of that sort."

"I should say a more popular young fellow never stepped," answered the superintendent, heartily. "Most popular, sir. Everybody liked him. Never heard a word against him from any quarter. His family's the principal family in the town; they've lived at the Manor Court since old Henry the Eighth's days. They're bankers—the principal bank belongs to them. This young Mr. Guy—his father died just as he was leaving Cambridge, so he became head of the family and chief proprietor of the bank at a very early age, only a couple of years ago. He soon showed that he was a very keen business man, and he began to take a strong interest in the borough affairs as soon as he settled down here. And this year he was elected mayor—been mayor just a month when he was murdered."

"Just a month!" soliloquized Milgrave. "Um—a keen business man—took a strong interest in municipal matters, eh? Was anybody against his election as mayor?"

"Not a soul, sir—unanimously elected," replied the superintendent. "Of course, both his father and his grandfather had been Mayors of Lyncaster in their time—ay, and their grandfathers before them. Our charter's a very old one, Mr. Milgrave—time of Edward the Third. We're an old community."

"So I observed from a mere glance round," said Milgrave. "Well, this is a queer business, superintendent. You haven't a clue of any sort?"

"Not the ghost of one," replied the superintendent. "I don't believe in that Italian notion myself. This is a very small town. It's almost impossible that a foreigner could come in, or go out, without being observed. Besides, supposing this Italian did come back, how could he know that the mayor was to be found in his parlor at that particular hour? No, sir. And yet I can't think who—who could want to kill this poor young gentleman."

"Was Mr. Hannington married?" asked Milgrave.

"No; single—lived with his mother and two sisters," answered the superintendent. "A fine way they're in about him, too, poor things!"

"Do they know whether he had any enemies—anybody who

had any reason for wanting to get rid of him?" suggested the detective. "On the very face of it, you know, there must have been some motive for the murder. I conclude, of course, that it wasn't robbery. Well, it may have been revenge. It may have been jealousy. Had Mr. Hannington any love affair?"

"Now, that's been speculated on," answered the superintendent; "but, according to his mother, he hadn't, and what's more, never had had."

"So far as she's aware, that is," observed Milgrave. He rose from his chair and buttoned his overcoat. "Well," he went on, "let's have a look round your Moot Hall, particularly the mayor's parlor."

The superintendent took his visitor out into the market-place, and across to the ancient building in which the affairs of the town had been conducted for so many centuries. Darkness had now fallen over Lyncaster, but Milgrave could make out the lines and general appearance of the Moot Hall by the light of the gas-lamps which flared from various stalls set up on the cobble stones. That it was a place of great antiquity he saw at once. Without making any pretense to any deep knowledge of architecture, he knew that this old building had probably been looking down on Lyncaster market-place in, at any rate, the later Tudor days. But he was not just then so much interested in its antiquity as in its relation to the crime which he was charged to investigate, and he proceeded to look over the place in systematic and business-like fashion.

II

The Moot Hall formed the center of a group of ancient buildings which almost completely enclosed one side of the market-place. It was entered by an archway which led into a vaulted hall. On one side of this hall lay the rooms in which the caretaker and his wife lived. A glass-paneled door and a small window looked out of the living-room into the hall, and commanded a clear view of the wide stone staircase by which access was gained to the upper apartments. These apartments were few in numbers. On the first floor was the council-chamber, a committee-room, the town clerk's private office, and the mayor's parlor; on the second some smaller rooms, used chiefly as storehouses for the municipal archives. Above that was a vast attic,

or lumber-room, in the high roof. All these various apartments and places were contained in the front of the building; through a door in the lobby of the first floor, entrance was obtained to a newer wing, in which the corporation offices were located. And, according to fixed rule, that door was locked and bolted by Learoyd at six o'clock every evening. It was, therefore, impossible for any person to enter the old, the front, part of the Moot Hall from the back after that hour.

"And Learoyd's positive," said the superintendent, "dead positive, that on that night he locked up just as usual, and hung the key in his parlor. So nobody could have got to the mayor in that way."

"There's the possibility that the murderer had hid himself somewhere in these old rooms before the mayor came," remarked Milgrave. "That's how it strikes me, anyhow. Hid himself, did his work, and sneaked out while Learoyd was busy with his supper. It wouldn't take him a second, you know, to slip out into the market-place."

They were standing on the threshold of the mayor's parlor just then, and Milgrave turned back into it and took another look around. The room had been left exactly as it was found when Learoyd made his terrifying discovery: the desk, the chair were precisely as the ill-fated young mayor had left them. There on the carpet and hearthrug was the terrible stain which signified so much. But Milgrave, who had already seen all this, did not look at it again. This time he was noting the antique beauty of the room—its groined roof, its vast fireplace, the mullioned windows, the fine oak paneling, black with age, the dusky oil-paintings of dead mayors and local celebrities, the fine old Queen Anne furnishings, the big oak chest. It was a fit scene for many things—for the deliberations of the town gray-beards, for the dispensing of that hospitality for which mayors are so famous—but not for a foul murder. He suddenly turned away, and, tapping his companion on the arm, went silently out of the room.

"Do you know what I'm wondering, superintendent?" he asked abruptly, when the elder man had locked the door, and they were going side by side down the wide stone stairs. "Can you guess?"

"Not at all, sir," replied the superintendent. "Something deep, eh?"

Milgrave laughed—a grim, slightly cynical laugh.

"Not so deep, perhaps," he answered. "No; I'm just won-

dering, not who it was that killed Mr. Hannington, but why he killed him—why? Motive, you know, superintendent, motive! If I could lay my mind on a motive—ah, I think I should soon lay my hands on a man. However, at present I'll get my bag, put myself up at the Lyncaster Arms yonder, eat my supper, and reflect."

Milgrave began to reflect as soon as he had quitted Superintendent Sutton's company, and he continued to reflect, and to surmise, and to speculate, and to invent theories, and to devise all manner of suggestions and possibilities during the next twenty-four hours—all without result. That evening, having installed himself at the old-fashioned hotel in the market-place and refreshed his inner man, he interviewed several people in Sutton's company. He interviewed more people next morning and at various intervals during the day. He got no light from anybody—no one had a single suggestion to make. The dead man's relatives could tell nothing beyond what Milgrave already knew; the great men of the town, Aldermen, councilors, magistrates, were frankly puzzled. The corporation officials were utterly bewildered.

The inquest, held at noon on that second day, revealed nothing; the only fact that was beyond dispute was that someone evilly disposed had obtained access to the mayor's parlor, while the mayor was in it on that evening of December 8, and had stabbed him to death. How the person had obtained access did not seem a very important point. The hall of the Moot Hall was not over well lighted at night. Learoyd and his wife were at supper for some time; anyone having this murderous intention in his heart could easily have slipped up the stairs unobserved.

The only point raised at the inquest which interested Milgrave was the opinion of the doctor as to the nature of the weapon used by the murderer. The doctor said that that weapon must have been a stiletto or finely-pointed dagger; the rapier of other days would have caused such a wound. The mention of stilettos made those present think of the vindictive Italian who had muttered what had appeared to be threats against Hannington when sent to prison. But during that day a telegram informed Sutton that the Italian was pursuing his career as showman in a far-off part of the country, and had certainly not been within a hundred miles of Lyncaster on the night of the murder. And at nightfall, on the second day of his arrival in the town, Milgrave

was as wise as ever. There was no clue; nobody had come under suspicion. The Lyncaster murder promised, in good sooth, to be one of those mysteries which are never solved.

Milgrave was sitting over a late supper that second night, wondering if the reason of the murder might not be found in some by-gone passage of young Hannington's life—some episode, say, of his college days—when Sutton came to the hotel, evidently primed with news. The superintendent closed the door of Milgrave's private sitting-room with great caution, and, in spite of their privacy, he dropped his voice to a whisper as he advanced to the detective's chair.

"Now then," he said, "I've heard something."

"Much?" asked Milgrave.

"Can't say whether it'll turn out to be much, little, or nothing; but it's something," answered the superintendent. "Did you notice, when you were at the inquest this morning, a queer-looking old chap that sat in a corner of the court—strange character in appearance?"

"No," replied Milgrave. "I never looked round the court at all. This old man, then——"

"Old chap of the name of Anthony Mallalieu, but commonly called Snuffy Mallalieu, from a habit of his," answered Sutton. "He's one of the oldest men in Lyncaster, a regular patriarch, and one of the characters of the town. Keeps a queer odds-and-ends shop where he sells all sorts of old things. He's a bit of an antiquary and so on. I saw him in court to-day, and just now I got this from him."

He handed the detective a scrap of the whitey-brown paper which is used in small shops for wrapping up odds-and-ends. On it Milgrave saw a few words traced with what had evidently been the sediment of a very muddy bottle of cheap ink.

"Mr. Sutton.—If you like to come and see me to-night, and bring that London gentleman with you, it may be to your advantage.—Yours truly,

"A. Mallalieu."

Milgrave smiled at the crabbed handwriting as he handed the scrap of paper back to his visitor.

"You think—what?" he asked.

"He's a deep 'un, is Snuffy Mallalieu," said Sutton. "He knows something. I noticed this morning how he was taking everything in at that inquest. We'd best go round and see him."

Milgrave had seen some strange places in his long experience, but never anything quite so extraordinary as the house and shop to which Sutton presently led him. The shop, which opened on a quiet alley behind the Moot Hall, was crammed from floor to ceiling with what most people would have called rubbish—old furniture, old glass, old brass, old pictures—odds-and-ends of every description without order, arrangement, or sequence, thick and black with the accumulated dust of ages.

There was scarcely room to turn in it; there seemed to be less room in the gloomy house behind, where passages, stairs, every nook and corner was piled high with similar goods.

A shadowy figure piloted them from the half-lighted shop through a narrow passage to a parlor beyond, filled with strange things and permeated with an atmosphere of gin, onions, and strong tobacco. Then the shadowy figure turned up the wick of a lamp, and Milgrave found himself staring at the queerest old man he had ever seen in his life, the sort of man who might have been imagined by Dickens or drawn by Doré.

He was very old and very dirty; his garments, of the style of the Regency, would have disgraced any scarecrow; there was a strong probability that he never took them off, and only put on a clean shirt once a year. Altogether, he was anything but nice to look at or be near, and Milgrave was thankful that he and Sutton were smoking strong cigars. But out of the old fellow's face, so wrinkled and scarred that it looked as if its skin—properly stretched—would have covered half-a-dozen human countenances, gleamed a pair of unusually bright, knowing eyes, and one of them favored the two men with a decided wink as a hand, that was suggestively like a bird's claw, pointed them to a dilapidated sofa—the only thing in the room on which a seat was available.

"All safe here," said the old man, in a much stronger and firmer voice than Milgrave expected to hear from such an ancient atomy. "I slipped the bolt in the shop door when you came in, Sutton, so we shan't be interrupted. Your servant, Mr. Man-from-London—you look a sharp 'un! Quiet and close and sharp—them's the sort—eh, Sutton? Well, well! but you must have a drop to drink. I drink gin myself, but I'll give you some whiskey that's been in bottle—ay, five-and-twenty years. I'll lay aught neither of you ever put lips to its like!"

Milgrave would have refused this offer of hospitality, but Sutton gave him a nudge and a look; he therefore remained

quiescent while the queer old figure, bustling about in its strange surroundings, produced a sealed bottle and dexterously drew the cork.

"I bought two dozen of that whiskey at Lord Felbrough's sale twenty-five years ago," he said. "I had it all specially corked and sealed and I've seen to the renewing of the corks at proper times. Now, then, here's what you might be surprised to see in this den, Mr. Man-from-London—clean glasses and pure water. Best crystal in two respects, eh, Sutton? Now, I'll help you, and then I'll help myself to a drop of my liquor—never touch aught but gin—and then we'll talk. A bit of talk—illuminative talk—is what you both want, eh?"

"Light—certainly," answered Milgrave.

"Ay, light!" exclaimed the old man, seating himself on a pile of leather-bound folios. "Light on darkness—what? You want to know who killed young Hannington, my lads, don't you?"

"Do you know?" asked Milgrave.

Snuffy Mallalieu's sharp eyes fastened themselves on the detective's with a shrewd twinkle. He suddenly bent forward and slapped Milgrave's knee with the claw-like hand.

"How old do you think I am, young man?" he asked.

"Eighty," replied Milgrave, promptly.

"You're wrong. I was an old fellow when Sutton there was a young man," retorted Snuffy Mallalieu. "I'm ninety-seven years old. If you doubt it, you can go and search the parish register. Ninety-seven! And sound in mind, body, and estate. Never wore glasses in my life, and still got the necessary teeth, and still as good of hearing as ever. I shall live to be well over a hundred."

"You're a marvel!" said Milgrave. He was wondering what all this was going to lead to, but he knew it was best to let the old fellow take things in his own way and at his own pace. "A marvel! Ninety-seven! A great age."

"Naturally, a man that's lived ninety-seven years in a place knows something about it," remarked the old man. "Sutton there can tell you that there's not much that I don't know about Lyncaster."

"Nobody knows more, I'll be bound!" assented Sutton heartily. "That's a certainty."

"Happen I know a bit more than I'm known to know," said Snuffy Mallalieu, with another glance at Milgrave. "Well,

now, there's been a bit of doubt as to whether whoever it was that killed the young mayor went into the Moot Hall by the front—eh?"

The two listeners pricked their ears; this was something like coming to a point. But neither spoke, and the old man laughed with the slightly teasing glee of conscious knowledge. Then his face changed and became serious.

"Until this affair happened," he said, bending towards his visitor, "I believed that there wasn't a soul but me who knew a secret about our Moot Hall. I thought I was the last to know it. Now I think—nay, I'm sure—somebody else knows it. It's this—there's a secret way into the old place!"

III

"What!" exclaimed Sutton.

"That's so," said the old man. "My father, and his father, and his grandfather, lived in our Moot Hall, where Learoyd lives now. They all knew of this secret way, and they passed the knowledge down. It's a way that cuts through the walls, goes down below the market-place, and ends—where do you think?"

Milgrave made no answer. His sharp wits told him that the usually stolid man at his side was waking up under the influence of that crafty, wrinkled old face; there was a new atmosphere in those strange surroundings—he himself was falling under its spell. He kept silent. But Sutton's big form stirred uneasily.

"Well—where?" he asked, almost with a growl. "Where, then?"

Snuffy Mallalieu thrust his face still nearer to the two so intently bent on his own. He sank his voice to the ghost of a whisper.

"In a secret staircase in the Bank House!" he answered.

Milgrave felt the superintendent jump in his seat. Then he turned on his companion with a strange look, his back to the old man.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Leggett's! You don't say!"

"Sure," answered Snuffy Mallalieu.

He, too, relapsed into the same silence as the other when he had spoken that one word. Milgrave wondered what the silence meant—to the others, at any rate; to him it merely signified

waiting. It seemed quite a long time before Sutton relieved his feelings with a big letting loose of his held-in breath, and a fervent exclamation.

"By Jove!" he said, in a tense whisper. "Who'd ha' thought it?"

"Just so," assented the old man. He pulled out an ancient snuff-box, took a hearty pinch, and looked at the superintendent. "You see what that means, Sutton?" he continued. "It's struck you! Mr. Man-from-London here doesn't see."

"Frankly, I don't," said Milgrave.

"Simple," remarked Snuffy Mallalieu. "Mr. Leggett, who lives at the Bank House, is a gentleman with a taste for antiquities and archæology. Also, he's for a good many years been manager of Hannington's Bank—trusted and responsible manager. Further, for ten years he's been borough treasurer. Eh?"

Sutton, who had been sitting open-mouthed, holding his glass in his hand, suddenly drank off his whiskey and rose. He rapped the old man's shoulder.

"You can show us where this secret way is?" he said.

"Ay, for sure!" answered Snuffy Mallalieu. "And whenever ye like."

"Now, then," said Sutton. "Sooner the better. Come across with us."

The old man shook his head.

"Not till you're certain that we shall be by ourselves," he said. "You'd better go and arrange matters with Learoyd. Let him send his missis to bed at their usual time, and then let us in. I'll meet you outside there at just after ten. Mind you, Sutton, I don't want all the town to know that I've told you. It's been a family secret up to now, but—now——"

"What?" asked Sutton.

Snuffy Mallalieu laughed mirthlessly.

"Now I think Leggett's found it out," he replied. "Well, till ten, then."

Sutton took Milgrave out of the odds-and-ends shop and drew him into a quiet corner.

"Do you know what that means—may mean, mister?" he whispered. "You heard Leggett's name mentioned? Manager of the bank—borough treasurer—ay, but he's more than that—he's trustee for I don't know how many families in town! There's been a pile of brass entrusted to Leggett in this place of late years. A quiet, very respectable, smooth-tongued gentle-

man—universally respected, as the term is. Leggett! But by the living jingo—suppose—suppose——"

"I want to hear more before I suppose anything," said Milgrave. "You know more than I do. Suppose—what?"

"Young Hannington was a keen 'un about business matters," replied Sutton. "I know he was beginning to go into things. Supposing he'd found something out—wrong, eh, with money matters? Bank funds, borough funds—what? Now, do you see? And what's to be done?"

Milgrave's mind was already made up on that point.

"Have you two or three men that you can thoroughly depend upon?" he asked. "Men to whom you can tell a little and rely on fully?"

"Half-a-dozen," answered the Superintendent, promptly. "Good 'uns!"

"Two will do," said Milgrave. "Let those two keep a quiet eye on that Bank House, back and front, while you and I find out what this old man's got to show us. If it's as he says, and if it's as you think it might be, why then——"

He ended with an expressive shake of his head, and hurried the superintendent away in the direction of the police-station.

Milgrave, naturally quick to observe things, had noticed on the first night of his arrival in Lyncaster that the townsfolk were evidently in the habit of keeping early hours. By half-past nine the lights began to be transferred from the lower to the upper windows, by ten the little town was wrapped in silence and in darkness, save for the two or three lamps left burning in the market-place. It was in this silence and semi-gloom that he and Sutton presently met Snuffy Mallalieu, who, buttoned to the chin in an old horseman's cloak, so ancient that it might have served some eighteenth century highwayman, awaited them in a corner of the Moot Hall entrance. Silently the three were admitted by Learoyd; in silence they went up the stone stairs. At its head Sutton produced a couple of bull's-eye lanterns.

"There are three windows in the mayor's parlor that look out on the market-place," he said. "I don't want anybody to see any big light on in here, so we'll use these things. They'll be useful, too, if we're going to explore this passage that we've heard of."

He unlocked the door of the mayor's parlor as he spoke, and when they had entered he relocked it. Then he set the two lanterns on a center table and turned to the old man.

"Now, then, Mr. Mallalieu," he said. "It's your turn. What's this that you've got to show me?"

Snuffy Mallalieu had moved over to the further end of the room, near the big fireplace, and was looking down at the stain on the carpet and hearthrug, which Milgrave had viewed, and made no comment on, at his first inspection. He looked up from it at the desk and the chair, and slowly nodded his head.

"Ay!" he said, reflectively. "Ay! Just as I expected it would be from what was said at the crowner's 'quest this morning—just! I see how it was done, my lads."

"How what was done?" asked Sutton.

"The murder, of course," answered the old man. "An easy job, though a clever one. Now, attend to me, both of you. As I told you, my father and grandfather were keepers—caretaker you call it now—of this Moot Hall, and their grandfather before them—ay, for two hundred years, as the town books 'll show, Sutton. Consequently, there's not much about the old place that I don't know of. Now, then, you see this mayor's parlor? There's the front, looking on to the market-place, with three windows. Here's the side, overlooking Finkle Gate—it's two windows. By this last window, on this Finkle Gate side, young Hannington had his private desk placed. There it is—there's the chair he sat in when he was stabbed. What's behind that chair? You see—a fine old tapestry curtain, divided in the middle. What's behind that? Come and look."

The old man picked up one of the lanterns, and led his companions to the corner of the room to which he was pointing. Milgrave, who was following him with intense attention, at once perceived what he meant. In the middle of that side of the room a big, canopied fireplace projected well into the apartment; on either side of it there were, consequently, deep recesses. The recess behind the mayor's desk and chair was draped with an antique tapestry curtain. Old Snuffy tapped this with his finger as they advanced to it.

"Now take notice," he said. "When that chair is in its proper place, in front of the desk, its back is separated from this curtain by a space of about eighteen inches. Consequently, a man standing behind that curtain, where it divides—here—could easily reach a man sitting in that chair. And what happened, my lads, when the young mayor was killed, was this—the murderer stood, unknown, behind the curtain, waiting. When the mayor sat down in his chair at the desk and bent forward to do his bit

of writing, the murderer put hand and arm through the divide in the curtain and drove his weapon straight into his back. The mayor, as the doctor said, would jump up, twist round, and fall across there, where Learoyd found him. Now, then, where did the murderer go? Why, he went where he came from! Look here!"

Milgrave, closely following these details and suggestions, was impressed by the almost feverish interest, the intense delight with which the old man was making them. It was plain that Snuffy Mallalieu's passion for antiquities was aroused, and that what appealed to him more than anything was his pleasure in explaining to his companions how the secret architecture of that ancient building had furthered the murderer's nefarious designs. The claw-like hand trembled with eagerness as it drew aside the curtain; the crafty eyes glittered as they roved over the dark time-stained paneling of the recess.

"Bring that other lantern, Sutton," commanded the old man, as he swept aside the tapestry. "Shine it on here—here. Mr. Man-from-London, you hold this; I want both hands. Now, then, look—both of you. You see that this recess is paneled, just like all the rest of the room. Queen Anne stuff this, gentlemen, every inch of it! Good, solid oak that came out of Lyncaster Forest, sound as a bell yet. Now, you can look all this paneling over as closely as you like, and it'll take you a long time to find where the door is that I've told you of. But it's here! And I'll lay you all I've got in my shop to a cracked tea-pot that the man who's discovered the secret of this door and the passage beyond has taken good care to grease the hinges! Now look. You put a finger on that bit of carving there, you press this other bit of carving here—and there you are!"

Under the old man's trembling hands a narrow strip of paneling, five feet by two, slid away in the angle of the recess, and revealed a deep cavity in the solid masonry of the thick wall. And Snuffy Mallalieu, stepping into this, and beckoning the others to follow, took a lantern from one of them, and held it down to the dust of the floor on which they stood.

"What did I tell you?" he said, with a grim chuckle. "There you are—oil! You see, he's oiled the machinery, so that it 'ud open easy. Now do you see the trick of it?"

"What I want to know," said Milgrave, "is—first, does that panel open from this side?"

For answer the old man drew the panel into place, shut it tight, and demonstrated its opening. He looked at the detective with a grin of triumph.

"And, second," continued Milgrave, "where does this passage lead to?"

"Ah!" answered Snuffy Mallalieu. "Now you're talking! That's the really important thing. Come on!"

The passage of which Milgrave had spoken, and into which Sutton was casting dubious and half-frightened glances, went off in the thickness of the masonry behind the built-out fireplace. It was about six feet in height, about two and a half in width. Cobweb hung from its roof, strange growths showed on its walls. But the dust that lay thick on its floor was dry enough, and the old man chuckled again as he held a lantern down to it.

IV

"Look there!" he said. "Footprints—plenty of 'em. Recent, all of 'em. Now, if you can pick out a nice, separate, distinct one, Mr. Man-from-London, and compare it with somebody's boot, eh?"

"I hope this is safe," remarked Sutton, looking uneasily about him. "No fear of it falling in, is there?"

"It's been safe for three hundred years and more," retorted Snuffy Mallalieu. He marched confidently forward, lantern in hand, until Milgrave had counted some fifteen paces. There a blank wall confronted them; at right angles to it appeared a narrow stairway, evidently cut through another wall. "Now, then," continued the old man, "do you know where we are, Sutton? That's the wall that runs down the side of the big staircase in the hall below. This stair's cut clean through it, right through the foundation, and into a passage, like this, that runs under the market-place. It goes right under Belford the butcher's cellars, and under the cellars of the next two shops, and then into another stair that cuts in the wall of the Bank House, which, I may tell you," he added, turning to Milgrave, "is an older building—the house part of it, anyway—than this Moot Hall. And in that house it comes out in another panel doorway that opens in Leggett's parlor, close by the fireside. There!"

The two men looked over the old fellow's shoulder into the

black chasm of the stair. Sutton sniffed doubtfully at the cold, damp air which hung about them.

"Come back to the mayor's parlor," he said. "We'd best decide what's to be done."

It was at this stage that Milgrave took command. He had been thinking deeply while the old man made his revelations, and he had now decided on the course which he wished to pursue. Once out of the nearest door, and standing near the spot still stained by the dead man's blood, he spoke with decision.

"There's only one thing to do, superintendent," he said. "You and I must call on this Mr. Leggett at once. You must make the excuse that we want to ask him a few questions about Mr. Hannington. Don't frighten him at first, nor later, for that matter."

Sutton looked at Snuffy Mallalieu, and laughed cynically.

"It 'ud take a good deal to frighten Leggett," he observed. "He's as hard and cool a customer as ever I had to deal with."

"All the better," said Milgrave. "Now, then, this is my plan: You and I go straight there; we engage Leggett in what we'll call casual conversation—speculative talk about the murder. It's now twenty minutes to eleven o'clock. You, Mr. Mallalieu, go through this passage and make your way to the secret door in Leggett's house. You've a watch on you! Set it by mine. Good! Now, then, at precisely eleven o'clock you knock on that secret door. Knock loudly—once, twice, thrice—a second or so between each knock. See?"

Sutton looked as if he did not quite see, but the old man nodded and chuckled gleefully.

"Good notion, my lad!" he answered. "I'll do my part; off you go. He's about certain to take you into that parlor; it's his sitting-room. But I'll knock in such a fashion that it'll be heard anywhere in the house. But keep your eyes open; he's one of those quiet chaps that might turn uncommon ugly, is Leggett."

"All right," said Milgrave. "Now, remember, eleven sharp!" He beckoned the superintendent to follow him out of the room, pausing on the stair outside to say a warning word or two to Learoyd. "Now, superintendent," he went on, as he and Sutton crossed the silent market-place, "is this Leggett a married man?"

"No; bachelor," answered Sutton.

"What household does he keep?" asked Milgrave.

"Couple of servants, middle-aged women. We've got to bear

this in mind," continued Sutton abruptly. "If he's—what there seems to be a probability that he is, he'll be a dangerous man to tackle. There's two of my men there in that entry opposite the Bank House; hadn't I better tell 'em to keep handy?"

"No—wait," answered Milgrave. "I think you and I can tackle one man, at a pinch. We can watch him without seeming to do so, the thing is to be alert at eleven o'clock. Now, then, you ring, and do the first talking."

The bank manager himself opened the door of the house, a quaint old building at one side of which stood the modern bank premises. He remained for a moment framed in the doorway, a lamp in his hand, silently regarding his visitors. Milgrave, watching him closely, saw no sign of fear on his face, nor any surprise; all that he showed was a cold disapproval.

"Well," he said, acidly, "what is it, Sutton?"

"Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Leggett," answered the superintendent, apologetically; "but can you give me and Mr. Milgrave here a minute or two? There's one or two little matters that you might be able to help us in, sir; just a small detail or two, you know."

Leggett stood back, motioning them to enter.

"You come at a strange time," he observed coldly. "Was this the only time you could hit on? However, come this way."

He closed the street-door behind them, then turned and preceded them down the hall to a room which Milgrave at once took to be the parlor of which Snuffy Mallalieu had spoken. One glance at it, when Leggett had turned up the light, showed its great age. The floor concealed beneath the thick modern carpet was uneven; the big oak rafters which spanned the low ceiling were bent and twisted. It needed little knowledge to know that behind the paneling of the walls lay ancient stone walls raised by some mason-hand of many a century ago. Instinctively, Milgrave looked towards the fireplace and its surroundings, wondering whereabouts in the highly-polished oak the secret door was. There were evidences of the owner's antiquarian tastes on every hand—in the beautiful old furniture, the cabinets of china and glass, the rare objects displayed on the walls, the old prints and books. But the owner himself was of more interest—a thin, sparely built man, with a cold eye and unsympathetic lips, keen, self-controlled—the sort of man who might not call forth affection, but would doubtless create trust and confidence.

"Sit down," said Leggett, still disapproving and acid. "What

is it you want to know? It seems strange to me that you should expect me to be able to tell you anything. I should think everything that can be told was told at the inquest this morning."

He was looking at Milgrave as he spoke, and the detective was quick to take up the challenge.

"Just so," he answered. "But only on the surface. This affair, of course, is something that depends on more than mere surface information. My duty is to go down as deeply as I can. You haven't any theory of your own, I suppose?"

The bank manager had listened to this with a supercilious smile. It was evident that he had no great idea of detective intelligence.

"If I have, I don't know that I'm bound to communicate it to the police," he said half-musingly. "But, since you ask the question, I don't mind saying that, in my opinion, if you want to get at the secret of Hannington's murder, you'll have to go far back—as far back as you can in such a young man's life. I'm not going to suggest anything, but you must remember that our late mayor spent three years at Cambridge and two in London before he came down here to take up his father's place as head of this bank, and—he may have made enemies. Eh?"

"Quite so," replied Milgrave. "And you think that some enemy contrived a clever entrance to the Moot Hall at a particular moment—the particular moment?"

He was watching Leggett closely now, and he was not slow to see that Leggett was watching him. A subtle gleam of something—was it suspicion, doubt, fear?—stole into the cold, blue eyes, and, instead of an answer coming, a curious silence fell over the three. Milgrave waited a while, and broke it himself.

"Whoever made his way into the mayor's parlor," he said, in a quiet, even voice, "must surely have been remarkably well-acquainted with Lyncaster Moot Hall. No stranger, for instance, would know how to time his entrance so well. The mayor did not usually go to his parlor at that hour every evening."

The thin lips smiled disagreeably.

"How do you know that Hannington hadn't made an appointment with his murderer?" they asked. "It's all nonsense, of course, about Learoyd not seeing anyone enter or leave. Learoyd was too busy with his supper to attend to things of that sort. A man could easily have slipped in and out; and as to

getting away, why, it's not two minutes' walk to the outskirts and the open country from any point of this town, and——"

Milgrave, as if in a fit of absent-mindedness, drew out his watch. It was already but a minute to eleven. He interrupted Leggett as if a chance idea had struck him.

"Of course," he said, indifferently—"of course, there may be means of obtaining entrance to your Moot Hall that I know nothing about. In these old places there are often such entrances—secret passages and such-like. And——"

He paused, looking at the bank manager as if for information. But even as he paused he saw that the shaft had gone home. A sudden twitch of the man's lips, a new light in his eye; but he laughed cynically, throwing up his head as if in contempt.

"Pshaw!" he said scornfully. "We don't live in the days of walled-up skeletons, and——"

With the first silvery chime of a clock that stood on the mantelpiece the first heavy knock sounded without the paneled oak by which the cynical voice was speaking; and, in spite of long years of training, Leggett sprang to his feet with a sharp cry, twisting round as he rose to stare at the wall whence came this strange summons. It came again, and the two watchers, who had also risen and were quietly moving nearer to him, saw great beads of sweat break out on his forehead. He reeled slightly, stretching out a hand; and as the third and more peremptory knock sounded, he uttered a queer, choking cry and dropped forward into Sutton's arms.

"Fainted!" muttered Milgrave. "Set him down there while I tell one of your men to call the doctor." He went out to the front door, and, returning a moment later, looked meaningly at the unconscious man. "That was a capital idea, superintendent," he said. "His nerve wasn't up to that. I shouldn't wonder if he fancied that was Hannington's ghost. Well, the next thing'll be to get at his motive. Financial, of course."

Milgrave stayed in Lyncaster long enough to have it proved to him, fully and abundantly, why Leggett killed the mayor. The borough accounts were all wrong—had been cooked and manipulated for many a year. The bank had been robbed, cleverly and systematically; numerous families had been defrauded. And the only thing that he ever wondered about, after Leggett had been safely hanged, was whether the murder would ever have been detected if Snuffy Mallalieu had not lived to his remarkable age in full possession of his remarkable faculties.

THE BUTLER

Frederick Harcourt Kitchen *(who writes under the pseudonym of* Bennett Copplestone*) was born at Teignmouth, Devon, in 1867. He was educated at Malvern College, and Selwyn College, Cambridge. In 1895 he joined the editorial staff of the London "Times," and later was the founder and editor of the Financial and Commercial Supplement of the "Times." From 1904 to 1908 he was Assistant Manager of the "Times," and from 1909 to 1917 he was the editor of the Glasgow "Herald." From 1918 on he has been the editor of the "Board of Trade Journal." He is a Justice of the Peace in Glasgow.*

Besides being an extensive contributor of articles and sketches to the leading English magazines, he published "Jitny and the Boys" (1916), "The Last of the Grenvilles" (1919), "Madame Gilbert's Cannibal" (1920), "Treasures of Golden Cap" (1922), and "Dead Men's Tales" (1926).

The two books in which his famous detective, William Dawson, appears are "The Lost Naval Papers" and "The Diversions of Dawson," the first published in 1917, the latter in 1923. "The Lost Naval Papers," as its title indicates, is a volume of secret-service fiction, consisting of four adventures bearing the titles "William Dawson," "Madame Gilbert," "To See is to Believe," and "The Captain of Marines." "The Diversions of Dawson" (containing "Mr. Cholmondeley Jones," "Ned Grimes, Deck-hand," "The Prime Minister," and "The Butler") is straightaway detective fiction of crime and deduction.

The Dawson story which follows is the fourth adventure in "The Diversions of Dawson."

THE BUTLER

By Bennett Copplestone

I

A CRY OF DISTRESS

"The one way," observed Dawson, "to prevent what has passed is to stop it before it happens. Though the principle is one upon which I do not often act."

"Say that again," I entreated cautiously. "It sounds to me like an aphorism of the late Principal Mahaffy. Like that one, 'An Irish bull is always pregnant,' or that other, 'Sterility is becoming hereditary in Ireland.' They are all sayings profoundly wise, yet slightly staggering when thrown at one brusquely across a dinner-table."

Dawson was dining with me at the Tyburn Club, where we feed together at long tables as one great, pleasant family party. I had been mildly anxious when I first introduced Chief Inspector Dawson to our circle. In origin he was a rough man of the people, he had worked in the dockyard at Portsmouth, he had served afloat as a Marine, and had upon occasion waited in ward-rooms upon men of the class with whom he now consorted on terms of equality. I did not know in what startling fashion he might not break out. But there was no cause for apprehension. Dawson, a born actor and accomplished observer, can mold his manners to his company as readily as he can mold his face to a disguise. After a brief trial run of careful courtesy—which made us laugh—he acquired that trick of humorous and inoffensive persiflage towards complete strangers which is the distinguishing note of the Tyburn. Presently he became exceedingly popular.

We had never before admitted to our circle a man quite like him. Every science and art was represented among us, every profession and Service; we were familiar with Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners of Scotland Yard—officials sprung

from the so-called educated and ruling classes—but a pukka working detective officer of the Secret Service was something wholly novel and delightful. My friends came to envy me my intimate association with Dawson and besought me to bring him as often as he would consent to come. For his part Dawson loved to come, to feel that he was now at last admitted to sit as a gentleman among gentlemen, and to be addressed familiarly as "Bill the Bloodhound" by friendly strangers of whose identities and occupations he had not the faintest notion.

"It may be," explained Dawson, "that I was quoting unconsciously, for there is not a drop of Irish blood in my veins. I am 'Ampsheer born and bred. I come out of a three-roomed cottage in Portsea Island, and I never went properly to school until I joined the Marine Depôt at Deal."

"That is what we like about you, Bill," said one who sat near; "most of us have been so squeezed into common patterns by public school and University molds that one can't tell t'other from which. Any one of us with different professional training might have become any other. Whereas you, most excellent Bill, were permitted to develop unchecked into the Bloodhound that God intended you to be. I have thought sometimes," he went on reflectively, "that I should like to do a bit of crime myself. Not a robbery, but, say, a quiet little unobtrusive murder. Most of us know men or women whom we would like to put away. But since we have read about you, Bill, and seen you here among us, crime has lost its attractions. I confess that I should not like to have you on the track of my offenses, mild though you look now."

"It is the sport I love," said Dawson—"the chase. There's nothing in game-shooting which can compare with a man hunt. I suppose that really I am mild, for when I've run down a man or woman, especially a woman, I always want to let them go again."

"I believe," I interposed, "that if Dawson had his way there would be no prisons. He hates them worse than Army field-punishments. It is the chase with him, always the chase."

Presently we were sitting in a group about the billiard-room fire, some ten or twelve of us, and as always when he dined with me at the Tyburn, Dawson was the center towards whom eyes and ears turned. It was the novelty of him. Lump of vanity though he was, Dawson, when he dined among those whom he called his betters, tried to be anxiously unobtrusive. He feared nothing so

much, among us, as a lapse into "throwing his weight about." He loved to sit and listen to the easy interchange of chaff, the quick-flung retort or gibe which was picked up and tossed back without offense. He sought to learn the trick of it, and did indeed come to hold his own at the pretty verbal game.

But though Dawson was content to sit and listen, he was not permitted long to remain silent. He was too actual and vital a man to be wasted while we tossed persiflage from one to another. We drew him out and made him talk, laughed at his professions of official discretion and assured him that within the walls of the Tyburn all might be spoken. Strange as it may seem, they are walls which hear yet do not reecho. If a tenth part of the indiscretions shouted there were whispered outside, the political, professional, and social life of London would dissolve into its elements. One may play with the high explosive of Truth at the Tyburn Club, but one knows its disruptive properties too well to venture upon taking it outside.

"What I intended to convey," observed Dawson, "by my rather Irish deliverance at dinner was that the best way to prevent crime was to anticipate it and to nip it in the bud. But that is not usually my way. I like to give a man every facility to commit a crime under my sympathetic observation. Then I can step in and nip him in the full blossom."

"You can scarcely apply that system to murder," I suggested, "for if you did the murdered man would have some excuse for actively haunting your slumbers. Short of murder, I can perceive that the method has its conveniences."

"I hate murder cases," said Dawson, "and never touch them if I can help. All the finicking about with post-mortems and chemicals and microscopes makes me sick. Put me on the trail of a criminal, and I will hunt him down by scent or eye and never leave go of him for an instant. But I am not very good at finding the trail for myself. That is why my strong line is Secret Service. There is never any trouble about the identity of spies—we knew them all during the war, every man and woman of them; the trouble was to put salt on their tails. Just now I have a case . . ."

"Go ahead, Bill," said one of his audience encouragingly. "We are all friends here."

"It is all right, Dawson," said I. "Keep what is really secret for my private ear while you entertain these uninitiated groundlings with the tasty bits which don't matter much."

Then Dawson spoke, weighing his words more carefully than do most of us when discoursing between the unechoing walls of Tyburn.

"It was after I had appeared at the *Willing Maid* enquiry and at the subsequent trial of Bonnefant, Plumbridge, and Rosie. We locked them all up, as you know, and saved the underwriters about fifty thousand pounds. They paid on the hull policies because of third-party interests, mortgagees, but they escaped all liability in honor for the fancy risks which young Matt Jubb had plastered all over the market. The underwriters made up between them a purse of a thousand pounds which they sent to me for my services. I reported the check to my official superiors and after a lot of haggling they allowed me to keep it. The swine would have ordered me to send it back if they had not been afraid that I should send in my resignation instead. They daren't let me resign because . . ."

Dawson caught my eye and stopped abruptly. His own Assistant Commissioner is one of our members, and stories travel within the club, though they may not leak over the doorsteps.

"Anyhow I kept the money. It was more cash than I had ever seen in my life before. I earned more once, but did not get it. A big firm of brokers, who do a lot of burglary and larceny risks, sent for me and offered fine pay if I would chuck the Yard and investigate for them all their suspicious claims. I refused. I still hope that the Bolshies will get busy enough to give me some Secret Service work again in real earnest. That is what I love. In the meantime, because I wouldn't go over to them, those brokers went to the Yard and obtained permission for me to be assigned to some very puzzling cases of jewel robberies which were causing heavy insurance claims. I am on them now. They are queer, very queer."

He paused, uncertain whether it were wise to continue. I encouraged him to go on. "I will tell you when to stop," said I kindly.

My fellow-members growled. "This Bennet man is insufferable," declared one of them. "He thinks that he is the only member who can ask Bill the Bloodhound to dinner. Be my guest next time, Bill, and you shall talk as much as you like."

"The essence of those cases is this. The procedure in each case is exactly the same, yet we cannot discover at present any relation between them. You remember the murders of Brides in a

Bath. Here were three murders all done in the same way by apparently three men in three different parts of London. It was not until we discovered that the three men were all one that we were able to prove the murders against that one. There was no evidence in the individual cases taken separately. As the Judge said in summing up at the trial: 'Any man might suffer the misfortune of losing one bride by drowning in a bath. A misadventure of the kind might conceivably happen twice to the same man. But when one man loses three brides all in this way, it is clear that the business has became a habit with him.' I won't swear to his lordship's words, but that is what they amounted to.

"My brokers had two claims for jewel robberies in their own office, and by enquiry in the market where experience is pooled, they had learned of three more. A lady's maid would be engaged with excellent references. She would give every satisfaction for a month, an exact calendar month, no more, no less. On the last day of the month she would walk out of the house with a bag in her hand and disappear. An hour or two later it would be discovered that all her mistress's jewelry which was not in the bank or on her person had also disappeared. The conclusion that it had been carried away in the lady's maid's bag was irresistible.

"Now, that has happened five times within the past eighteen months, and it may have happened more often, since some owners of jewelry neglect to insure. Those five were insured cases. Up to that point there was nothing remarkable except the uniformity of procedure. What is extraordinary follows."

Dawson looked at me again. I nodded. He went on. "In those five robberies a great quantity of valuable stuff was stolen, but none of it was the sort of stuff which cannot be disposed of. You will understand that if anyone steals a stone or a necklace with a pedigree, nothing can be done with it while it remains intact. One might as well try to sell Chatsworth House without the Duke of Devonshire's permission. But most of the stuff in these five cases was readily saleable in the quarters well known to the criminal classes—and to the police. Yet not a single scrap out of any one of those hauls, not a stone or a necklace, or a watch, or a brooch, has been traced. We have been through the pawnshops and criminal 'disposal boards' of England and the Continent with a hair sieve, yet have not come up against a single item from any of those five robberies. One might con-

jecture that they were all done by the same lady's maid, though of that we have not at present any proof. In each case she appears to have been an entirely respectable, well-recommended servant. But if there are five lady's maids, or only one lady's maid, why should the jewelry be stolen and no attempt made to realize upon it?"

"Perhaps it was all broken up very quickly," suggested one, "the settings melted down and the stones disposed of separately."

"That did occur to us," replied Dawson sweetly. "We have no evidence one way or the other. I cannot tell you any more, but I will say just this. I believe that there were not five lady's maids, but one lady's maid. Just one. And I should like to be on the spot when the sixth robbery is committed and see for myself exactly what the procedure is and what the motive is. She is a bit of a genius, that woman, and I am a bit of a genius too in much the same way."

The story was new to me. I heard of it that night at the Tyburn Club for the first time. Dawson, a baffling mixture of secretiveness and blatant candor, had not told me of the thousand pounds which he had earned in his character of Ned Grimes, Deck-hand, nor of the cry of distress for their ravished funds which had gone up from the underwriters of fine ladies' jewel-boxes. Later on he became more communicative, and as his scheme worked out for observing the lady's maid at work upon her sixth haul—actually as was discovered afterwards it was number seven in the series of robberies—he was good enough to keep me fully informed. Dawson never overlooks the value of publicity, nor fails to realize that if he would enjoy fame he must come to me to make it for him. "News" does not depend upon the occurrence of events but upon the presence of reporters. There would have been no Johnsonian table-talk in our ears today had it not been treasured and recorded by the listening Boswell. There would be no Diversions of Dawson for the world to read if Copplestone had not been put into a position to write them. Dawson knew this fully as well as I did.

Let us consider for a moment the problem as it presented itself to Dawson, and supply some details which were not contained in his rapid sketch at the Tyburn Club. In each case a lady of considerable wealth, whose social position had yet to become established, advertised in the *Morning Post* for a lady's maid. Among the letters of application—which were in no case very

numerous—was one well written and well expressed. It described a maid who had lived in good houses and who had traveled a great deal. It mentioned the languages with which the writer had some acquaintance. It gave details of other accomplishments, among them a rather unexpected proficiency at bridge.

In each instance it was this unusual accomplishment which carried conviction to the mind of the advertiser that the maid would probably suit her. For the New Rich hope always that they may be received into the homes of the New Poor and be permitted to pay their whacks, as Dawson put it, by judicious losses at bridge. At bridge one needs to be proficient in order to lose judiciously. A reference was always given to a former employer fairly well known in Society. When applied to, the referees always spoke in favorable terms of the maid. An engagement followed.

The maid was a pearl among maids. She gave the New Rich more useful instruction in the course of one month how they might get into social touch with the New Poor than they could have thought out for themselves in ten years. The maid, trusted entirely by the mistress, quickly gained access to all her jewels, except to those few of such high value that they were kept permanently in bank vaults. In one instance an especially precious necklace had been taken out of cold storage for an hotel dance on the evening before the robbery fell due. It vanished with the rest. The maid, evidently a careful person—probably of Scottish extraction—always waited until she had received her first month's wages. Then came the episode of the bag, the afternoon walk, and the final disappearance of maid and jewels.

Each mistress, when first interviewed by Dawson, refused to believe that her maid was a thief. Some villain must have kidnapped her and made off with the bag. When Dawson inquired blandly what the maid was doing with a bag full of jewels, there was no adequate reply. Then from the mistresses Dawson proceeded to examine the referees upon whose recommendations the maids had been engaged. All the five of them were strangely embarrassed and secretive. They admitted that they had given recommendations, but declined, or were unable, to furnish particulars which might lead to the maid's apprehension. Dawson, it will be understood, was proceeding on the theory that there were not five maids but one maid in five incarnations. The names were, of course, all different and the letters of application

were in different handwritings. But the particulars furnished were all much the same, and the several descriptions of the appearance of the maids were consistent with Dawson's assumption of unity. In every instance the clothes left behind at the maid's flitting served no purpose of identification; they were new and unmarked.

At this stage he began to honor me with some more of his confidence.

"At first," said he, "I suspected the mistresses of being in collusion with the maids. To insure jewelry and then to pretend that it has been stolen is common enough still, though it has become a game full of hidden dangers. I thought that these women might have tried to raise the ready out of their insurance companies or Lloyd's underwriters. But I had to give up that idea. Not one of them had the courage or experience for such a bold coup. They were just silly women plated with their husband's ill-gotten gold. Then I turned to those Society dames who had given the references and learned that none of them was well off, and that all of them were rabid bridge players who had made what for them were very heavy losses. Could, I asked myself, the referees be in collusion with the maid or maids on the regular criminal basis of fifty-fifty? That possibility is still in my mind. They made a bad impression upon me! I have rarely knocked up against a shiftier lot, even among female witnesses. There is something rocky about them, I am sure. Nothing further can be done on the present lines. It is an occasion for Dawson to strike out for himself."

"I rather fancy," said I, "from my profound knowledge of you, that I can foresee your next move."

"What is it?"

"You are going to arrange for a robbery at which you can look on as a deeply interested spectator. I hope that you are not going so thoroughly into the business as to become an accomplice, though that is not inconceivable."

Dawson grinned. "I am not cracked about the Law, yet there are limits to the looseness with which I interpret my lawful functions. Though I am not going to become an accomplice in jewel robbery, I shall do my best to arrange for quite a pretty one. My Assistant Commissioner has introduced me to a rich widow with whom I am about to take service as butler. She has a tidy lot of trinkets, some of them of considerable value. They shall be the bait with which I will fish."

"Does the rich widow comprehend her part in the great scheme?"

"Bless you no. That would be to spoil it entirely. It happens that she has just bought the lease of a house in Half Moon Street and requires a butler and maid. I have been engaged as the butler—the A.C. has vouched for me as an old retainer of his exalted family—and between us all we are about to fix up a maid. We shall advertise in the *Morning Post*. The widow, warned by the A.C. that there are a lot of crook maids about who steal jewels, has promised to allow him to inspect the applicants. That means me too. The advertisement will appear on Saturday, and I shall enter upon my duties as butler on the Monday. What are you laughing at?"

"You," said I. "Your capacity, Dawson, for maintaining assumed characters is infinite. You were an incomparable Cholmondeley Jones, journalist and author. Your part of Ned Grimes, Deck-hand, was played to the very life; your black broken teeth and the resultant symptoms of pyorrhœa would have taken in anyone who did not spot you by mark of ear. I did not see your understudy of the Prime Minister and therefore cannot gage its fidelity. It was successful, which is a rough test of quality. But, Dawson, butlers are born, not made. Training ripens their flavor; it can do nothing to create them. Picture to yourself Joseph at the house of Sir Robert Munro, of whose perfections you descanted to me so eloquently. You might imitate his appearance, yet fail utterly to reproduce his sublime grace. If you must play the part of butler, seek first, I implore you, to impersonate a bishop. Thence by slow advances you may arrive at the highest of human dignities."

"I have served as mess steward many a time afloat," said Dawson. "I understand the elements of the flunkey job. And when it comes to manner, I will base myself upon Joseph. The widow won't be critical; she thinks that I have served at the table of a duke."

"I have no extensive acquaintance among dukes, but, as Lord Rosebery said once, I have always found them a poor but honest class. They are so simple and unassuming that to wait upon them, and give satisfaction, is to achieve no great butlerian exploit. Still, proceed, carry on as requisite. I am less interested in you than in the maid. Of her beware. For if you succeed between you in enticing the jewel robber into your net, you will find her a jewel of a woman herself. I would warn you

also, my poor Dawson, against the rich widow, if it were not that your official superior, the A.C., has already diverted her attention towards his own person. You can tackle men, Dawson, but when it comes to a sprightly lady's maid, and one whom you already admire as being in all probability a five times successful robber, you will be as wax under the fire of her eyes. I have never myself employed a butler, yet I am told that in a household of female servants butlers enjoy the status—I speak with a profound sense of delicacy—the status of Old Man of the Herd. If, Dawson, this accomplished and unscrupulous maid should have designs upon you . . ."

"I am a married man," said Dawson stiffly.

"That will make her the more perilous," said I.

II

BERTRAM MUMPSEY

On Monday morning at eleven o'clock the Assistant Commissioner who was Dawson's Chief knocked upon the door of 20A Half Moon Street, which issues northwards out of Piccadilly. He was admitted by James the butler, a servant of evident distinction, whose portly figure exuded dignity and whose morning dress, of the discreet cut appropriate to butlers in daylight, fitted his rotund shape as though it had been melted into it.

"Is Lady Evelyn at home?" enquired the A.C. gravely, resisting a pressing desire to smite this model of domestic perfection a hearty blow in the ribs.

"Her ladyship is at home to the Hon. Sydney Se'noaks," replied James in a smooth, toneless voice.

The A.C. walked into the morning-room as James opened the door, and then, turning, whispered, "You look fine, man."

"Sir?" James raised his eyebrows in startled inquiry.

"Come, Dawson," snapped the A.C. "You need not keep up the game with me."

James's blank face might have been chipped out of solid oak. He bent slightly towards the incomprehensible visitor and replied, "I fear, sir, that there is some mistake. My name is Bertram Mumpsey."

The A.C. stared, closely surveying every line of him. The butler withstood the scrutiny unmoved. There were many of

Dawson's incarnations with which the Assistant Commissioner was familiar, but this one, if indeed it were one, baffled him completely.

"Mumpsey? Then why in blazes are you here?"

"My name, sir," said the butler, respectfully garrulous as to an appreciative listener, "was originally Montpensier and my ancestors were of the *haute noblesse* of France. In French Montpensier; in English, I regret, Mumpsey. I am here because I came with a letter of recommendation from the Hon. Sydney Se'noaks, from yourself, sir."

"Montpensier! Mumpsey! Really, Dawson, you are sublime."

James proceeded with his explanation. "In my veins, sir, runs a trickle of the Royal Blood of France, though maybe in its origin lamentably irregular. I comport myself humbly in my present station, though I could wish that her ladyship would not insist upon designating me by the cognomen of James. I should have preferred my own name of Bertram, sir."

"It can't be done," replied the A.C., still worried as he looked upon a graven image of a face which resembled in no feature the many Dawsons of the Yard. "It can't be done, James. Butlers are like Popes, they are compelled by historic usage to ring the changes on a few recognized notes. There have been many Jameses, yet no Bertrams. But tell me: how did you get in here? I wrote my cousin no recommendation of a Bertram Mumpsey."

"No, sir. You left the name blank and the envelope courteously unsealed. I took the liberty of inserting the name myself, sir."

"Well, well. If you are Dawson, you are a treat. If you are not, I shall presently find out and boot you through the front door. In the meantime, discharge your office and notify the Lady Evelyn of my arrival."

James backed out of the room, and though the A.C. watched him closely he could not discern the flicker of an eyelid.

Lady Evelyn McInnes, a brisk widow of thirty-five, rattled into the room. She was small, dark, and exceedingly attractive. "Hullo, Syd, old dear," she cried, and held up to be kissed a delicately powdered cheek. James averted his eyes.

The widow held in her hand six letters which James early that morning had retrieved from the office of the *Morning Post*. They were unopened.

"Good," said the A.C. "We will examine them together without prejudice. With your permission, Evelyn, we will retain the assistance of James the butler. His vast experience of women will be most useful."

Lady Evelyn laughed. "By all means. Though I should have judged that James could qualify at sight as janitor in one of Boccaccio's nunneries."

"Ah!" whispered the A.C. darkly. "Appearances are deceptive. Within that grave exterior of too too solid flesh courses the hot Royal Blood of France. Do you not realize that Bertram Mumpsey whose dazzling identity you camouflage as James, is a Montpensier? And to be a Montpensier is to have had fair ancestresses whom the Kings of France delighted to honor."

"You overwhelm me," gasped the Lady Evelyn. "Ought I to curtsy to my own butler?"

"It is not usually done, my lady," observed James, a tinge of regret in his level voice. "Our bend sinisters are of ancient date, and we English Montpensiers no longer lay claim to our ducal rank."

"Bless my soul!" cried Lady Evelyn, laughing, yet regarding the solemn James with a newly aroused respect. "Is it possible? Though James looks too much like a duke to be a real one. I had thought myself well suited, yet I am scarcely content to live in the shadow of this ineffable condescension."

"Your ladyship," observed James sententiously, "it is, I opine, more worthy to earn one's bread as a first-rate butler than to starve as an obscure, unrecognized scion of a Royal impoverished house. I am content to remain your butler James, though I would prefer that you should call me Bertram."

"No, James," replied the widow decidedly. "As a ducal butler you approach perfection, if, indeed, you do not actually attain to it. But if you remain with me it must be as plain James. It is a label, not a name. All my butlers are James, and I can permit of no exceptions."

"As your ladyship pleases."

"And now perhaps we might get on with these letters," observed Lady Evelyn. "Now that I enjoy the services of a duke as butler my maid ought to be a princess at the least."

The A.C. ran quickly over the letters. Five of them he tossed aside; the sixth he retained, reading it with great care. "There, Evelyn, what do you think of that?" asked he.

"It sounds good," assented she. "Though I don't especially want my maid to be an expert at bridge. In other respects she appears to be admirable. Bridge!"

"James," cried the A.C. "Just cast your ducal eye over that."

James read—I crave his pardon—James perused the letter carefully.

"The name of the young person attracts me, sir. Rose McLean. A sweet name Rose, sir!"

"Really, James!" murmured the widow.

"If her ladyship will pardon me for venturing an opinion, may I say that though her ladyship may have no occasion for proficiency at bridge in her dressing-chamber, this accomplishment in—er—Rose will be greatly appreciated in the staff sitting-room. I understand that the cook and table-maid are beginners of some promise, so that with—er—Rose as an accomplished performer and myself . . ."

"James," snapped the widow sharply, "why does one in these days keep a house and servants?"

"I have often respectfully wondered, your ladyship."

"That is most kind of you. Well, understand that it is not in order that the servants may enjoy a happy home where bridge is on tap in the staff sitting-room. I am doubtless Victorian in my notions."

The A.C. interposed; he feared an explosion of his cousin's hot temper.

"Please excuse James, my dear Evelyn. It is that ducal blood of his bubbling up again. The point is: shall we fix upon Rose McLean in spite of her leanings towards bridge? If you decide upon her, I will follow up the references. Make your own choice; she is to be your servant, not ours." This he said diplomatically, knowing full well that should Lady Evelyn choose anyone but Rose he would contrive to discover subsequently the gravest disabilities in the one chosen.

Lady Evelyn read over the McLean letter again and looked at some of the others. "McLean's is much the best," she agreed. "The one blot that gets my goat is the assumption that the creature can teach me bridge. Me! It is true that I generally lose, but no one can say that I don't obey the rules; except when my partner annoys me. Will you promise, James, not to play bridge with McLean if I engage her? You servants are so much richer than your mistress that my guests will want to

desert my drawing-room for the staff card-table. If you desire to keep a gambling-hell, it shan't be in my house."

"Your wishes are my orders, your ladyship."

"You are more polite than any other duke of my acquaintance, James. If you continue to be so perfect a butler, I shall begin to doubt if you are any more real as a butler than you are as a duke. All right, Syd. Follow up the McLean references, and if they stand the strain ask her to come and see me here. Or perhaps she would like me to call upon her at her bridge club?"

"Now, Evelyn, don't be nasty," said the A.C., well pleased. "I feel sure that you will get as surprising a maid as you already have a butler. Your establishment will be the last word in chicness."

"James," murmured the Assistant Commissioner as the butler opened the front door for him to depart, "quick, tell me. Are you Dawson? My poor mind staggers between the conviction that you are and the certain evidence of my senses that you are not."

"I do not enjoy the privilege of the gentleman's acquaintance, sir," replied the butler. "My name is . . ."

"Norval," snapped the A.C. "Oh, damn! If I don't screw your tail when I get you back to the Yard call me . . ."

"Snooks," whispered James. "Spelled Se'noaks. Good morning, sir."

James remained for a moment at the open door, watching the receding back of his furious Chief. Even at that blissful moment his dignified face did not for an instant relax. "Wonderful," he murmured pensively. "They call themselves detectives, yet all this time not one of them has had the gumption to make a close study of my ears."

* * * * * * *

Two or three days later the A.C. dropped in at Half Moon Street at an hour when he knew the Lady Evelyn to be absent. He was received by James as blandly as upon the first occasion. "Dawson," said he, "I am sure of you now. No real butler would have ventured upon humorous rudeness towards a real departing guest. I have come to warn you that the plot thickens. Rose McLean's reference to a former employer was perfect, as I fully expected that it would be. But precisely as in those other cases which we investigated, that former employer is also a considerable loser at the bridge table. We are in deep waters.

I do not believe that the highly respectable member of Society who has vouched for Rose McLean's adequacy and trustworthiness as a maid has ever set eyes upon the girl in her life. If I make no mistake there is as much blackmail as jewel robbery in these mysterious affairs. You will have your work cut out for you, Dawson."

"Sir," replied James patiently, "I prefer the name of Montpensier, even though it may be pronounced Mumpsey. Now, touching this Dawson with whom you are pleased to confuse me . . ."

"For two pins, Dawson," howled the A.C., "I would pluck you out of this house and hand over the job to Pudden-head Wilson."

"That is as you wish, sir," replied James. "But will you not find it a little difficult to explain to Lady Evelyn how you came to give Bertram Mumpsey a personal recommendation as butler? You are, if I may venture to affirm, sir, somewhat closely involved in the fortunes of the ducal house of Montpensier. You may have observed, sir, that her ladyship has an aristocratic quickness of temper, which would resent anything in the nature of a deliberate deception. If I am not a bona-fide butler, sir, then I venture to predict that you will no longer remain with my lady upon the agreeable terms of intimate cousinship."

"Dawson," growled the A.C., "you are a pretty villain."

* * * * * * *

Miss Rose McLean, duly vetted and passed as fit for service, arrived one evening at 20A Half Moon Street. She was received by the sedate James, at whose inhumanly wooden countenance she cocked the ribald eye of one experienced in the ways of butlers, and was handed over by him to a housemaid. There were six adult servants in the *ménage* of Lady Evelyn McInnes, and a boy who was privileged to understudy and bottle-wash for James. The accomplished butler, one understands, consents to open the front door for his mistress's guests, to wait at table, to clean the silver, and to take charge of the wine-cellar—when there is one—but to do a hand's turn of other work is without the rules of his trade union. Dawson, technically world-perfect in any part that he undertook, compelled his subordinate to toil well up to the collar. He was no blackleg. The secret of his birth, which had instantly trickled downstairs from the ground-floor to the kitchen, so fluttered the hearts of the cook and maids that they

curtsied in his presence and refused to seat themselves at table until he had graciously accorded his permission.

Rose had not been ten minutes in the house before she learned of the social privileges which were to be hers. The housemaid who showed her to a small bedroom in the roof waxed so eloquent upon James that she failed to notice that the new maid's clothes—which she assisted to unpack—were of a newness so very new that they had not even been marked. Presently Rose descended to the staff sitting-room and was presented in due form. "Miss Rose McLean," said the cook, who though unwedded wore a ring and was addressed professionally as "Mrs." —"Miss Rose McLean, His Grace the Duke of Monpensy."

It was a sublime moment. James controlled his visage perfectly, but there was a suspicious glint in Miss Rose's blue eye. James took a quick look at her, rapidly penetrative. He saw before him a small, fair creature, perhaps thirty years old, perhaps a bit younger, trimly put together, and very well dressed in black. Her clothes were too good even for a lady's maid, but then they might have been the clothes of her late mistress. In manner she was gravely demure, though her eyes with their long lashes hinted of amorous possibilities.

It was when she spoke that James experienced a thrill which was not entirely unpleasing to a man of the most resolute virtue. Rose owned, and knew well how to employ, one of those silvery, caressing voices which call the sternest man to heel as a willing slave. There is no safeguard against a voice like hers except stone deafness. It was, I think, Oliver Wendell Holmes who said that he once was moved to follow a German peasant girl—otherwise most unattractive—to the ends of the earth because her voice wrapped itself about his heart and dragged it from his bosom. That was a voice like Rose McLean's. The nearest thing in nature, outside womankind, to a voice such as hers is the thrilling sob of a thrush in a Devon garden.

"I am honored by His Grace's acquaintance," said Rose McLean. It was a speech jejune and formal, with just a trace of subtle mockery, yet Dawson quivered to the soft cadence of it.

They all sat down to supper, and presently James the butler came to listen to Rose's voice with enjoyment, though without that first shock of emotion. He grew hardened to her dulcet tones, as, in former days, he had become hardened to the compelling accents of Madame Gilbert. All his professional acute-

ness awoke, and while he talked with Rose McLean, and delighted in the witchery of her, he did not fail to study her and to seek to catalogue her. He recognized very quickly, what none of her employers had looked to see in one labeled as a "maid," that Rose McLean was not and never had been of the lady's-maid class. Her employers had conventionally described her as "ladylike." Dawson grasped that there was no likeness, no imitation. Rose was the genuine article, by birth and breeding, however long might be the tales of her crimes against the laws of property in jewelry.

This discovery increased, if that were possible, Dawson's interest in her. Hitherto he had judged the series of robberies as the work of a female crook, a member of the recognized criminal class which he knew so well, but this theory was no longer tenable if Rose were the plotter and performer. He was almost disposed, in a spasm of male weakness, to acquit her of suspicion, to write her down as a gentlewoman who had been driven by stress of unkindly circumstance to earn her livelihood as a servant. But when he remembered her letter of application, and compared it in his recollection with those other letters all similar in character which had brought the robber and the ravished jewelry into contact, he could not doubt that in Rose McLean he and his A.C. Chief had drawn into their trap the author of the whole series of larcenies. From that moment, however much she might personally attract his eyes and ears, Dawson was proof against any feminine fascination which aimed at deflecting him from his purpose. Though in the doing of it his masculine heart might bleed, he would run Miss Rose in as efficiently and ruthlessly as he had run in many another pretty woman. I have never discovered in Dawson a scrap of respect for the interests of pure Justice, but he had the most complete and intolerant respect for the interests and reputation of Chief Inspector William Dawson. No woman born could induce him to forget them.

Miss Rose McLean entered upon her duties on the 17th of February. If she were indeed the perpetrator of the other jewel robberies—of which Dawson had now little doubt—she would conform precisely to the program which upon five occasions had proved to be well chosen. That is to say, the "event" would happen in the afternoon of March 17th, upon which day Miss Rose would receive her wages and, by immemorial usage, would be permitted some hours of luxurious freedom for the spending

of them. Habitual crooks are so faithful to a program that the precision of their deeds betrays them; they can be surely recognized by the manner of their commission. When the man Smith murdered three brides in a bath, with exactly the same preliminary and subsequent procedure in each case, he was doing what all do, men or women, to whom a crime has become a habit. Dawson as James the butler had not therefore any anxiety that Mistress Rose would work a surprise upon him. She would, he was convinced, walk out of No. 20A Half Moon Street, carrying a bagful of stolen jewelry, on March 17th, for which moment of departure he would make the most meticulous of preparations. Meanwhile, during the four weeks of waiting-time, he would entertain himself with the study of his victim and establish himself in the eyes of Lady Evelyn as the perfect butler.

Rose McLean had little difficulty in establishing herself as the perfect lady's maid. And this simply because she was not a lady's maid at all, but one who had herself employed maids. She knew from experience of the other side of the domestic bargain exactly what the mistress wanted from her maid and so rarely succeeded in getting. She gave Lady Evelyn what she wanted; in the most Christian spirit she did as she would be done by. So that in less than a week McLean, as Lady Evelyn called her—she had no uniform label for maids as for butlers, realizing that though a man will sink an identity in a verbal badge, a woman won't—McLean had gained the trust which it was her purpose to gain.

Sydney Se'noaks dined in Half Moon Street fairly often to see how his protégés shaped, and to him Evelyn discoursed with enthusiasm upon her two impeccable servants. "My butler is a gem," said she, "not least because he thinks that dukes behave in a manner alleged to be ducal. No duke in the flesh is ever a duke in the spirit like James; he is more like a tramp. As for my maid, she thinks of everything and anticipates all my wants. I am a captious creature not easy to serve. She knows every phase of my captiousness. And her voice! I have no special property in you, though you say that you are in love with me, but I would not let you talk alone with Rose McLean for five minutes. You would be her slave for life. She does not talk; she trills at one like a nightingale. How the old image James can resist her I cannot imagine. Consider his bountiful opportunities. And yet I believe he has even kept his promise not to

play bridge with her. If I were a man, and a woman with a voice like that asked me to break a promise—especially one to an employer—I would crumble it into bits before her eyes. Like the piecrust to which promises are compared."

It is to be regretted that though James had kept his promise in the letter—to this extent Lady Evelyn did his probity adequate justice—bridge after supper had become for the staff of 20A an agreeable means of forgetting the working day. Miss Rose had with small effort brought feminine casuistry to the solution of a problem in domestic ethics. When James mentioned regretfully that he had promised Lady Evelyn not to play bridge with her, she had instantly replied:

"It would have been stupid to have played with me even if there had been no promise. We are by a long chalk better players than the others. You shall take Mrs. Briggs, while I teach Ethel the table-maid not to revoke more than twice in one evening. So that you will play against me, not with me, Duke James." Dawson had laughed and agreed at once. He wanted his bridge, and he cared not a straw for a promise made in his identity as butler. So that the nightly bridge, begun on the second day after Rose's arrival, continued undisturbed throughout the month. Lady Evelyn, wise woman, never harried her staff by impertinent intrusion upon their privacy.

One fears that Dawson's moral sense had become weakened by the assumption of so many identities. At Acacia Villas, Tooting, where he was the Dawson known only to his wife, to me, and to God, his morals were of the sternest type. He was a Hard-shell Baptist, a preacher of power, and unswerving in the pursuit of truth. Not by the fraction of an inch did he permit his steps to stray from the knife-edge of truth. But everywhere else, in all those other identities and capacities which he put on and took off as one might gloves, truth toiled after him in vain.

And it was not only from the path of truth that he would sometimes lapse. One must not ask too much of virtue even from a professed anchorite, and Dawson was far from qualifying as an anchorite. Under the sidelong glances of Mistress Rose's eyes—as they sat adjacent at the bridge table—the ducal butler would so far forget the existence of a wife in Tooting as to press her little foot under the table. These things are expected as between butlers and maids, and Dawson always played a part to the last knot on the thong of his buskin. And as with him, so

with Rose. She also was playing a part and was quite willing to flirt judiciously with a presentable butler—more especially with one who laid claim to being a Montpensier—and to permit that he should respond judiciously. Just as Dawson, the strict moralist, required an accommodating frailty in his feminine subordinates at Scotland Yard, so he was prepared to allow a similar necessary frailty to himself as James the Butler. No great harm was done. Nothing worse than this.

Rose had come into James's pantry one afternoon where he was pretending to be polishing his silver. In fact he made John, the page, do it as part of the boy's education. She had come to ask a question from her mistress, no matter what. Then she remained to chat for a moment. Dawson, standing there within the seclusion of four walls listening to the rise and fall of that throbbing *vox humana* in Rose's white throat, mentally bewailed his life of misspent virtue. "As I lay me down to die," observed upon his death-bed a very wise man, "it is not for my sins that I weep; it is for my wasted opportunities." So it was, just a little, with Dawson then. He sidled towards Rose. She smiled at him without moving. He placed an arm about her trim waist. She continued to smile.

"James," murmured Rose, "are you really a Montpensier?"

"Really and truly," replied James stoutly. "Of the blood of kings."

"James, how did you come to be a butler?"

"In much the same way that you became a lady's maid, my dear," said James.

Rose started, her eyes hardened.

"Necessity," explained James quickly.

Rose's eyes softened again. "Yes, necessity. We are the slaves of necessity, James. So that you are a Frenchman, James?"

"More or less," said he cautiously.

"I have heard it said," trilled Rose, in her throstle notes, "that Frenchmen excel in fighting and in—kissing."

"They do," agreed James.

There was a long silence.

"They do," sighed Rose. "At least . . ."

"We will postpone the fighting," said Dawson.

III

ACCORDING TO PLAN

The days fled by, happy days agreeably rounded off with bridge and sweetened now and then by incidents in which Bertram Mumpsey gave satisfying evidence of his French origin. No harm was done. Never had Dawson known duty and pleasure commingle so perfectly as during his few brief weeks as butler. Like Lord Clive he was astounded at his own moderation. For he sported only with Rose McLean, who responded to his advances in a spirit of levity which made the game fair as between equal partners to it. The other women, from the elderly cook to the youngest housemaid, thrilled by his assumption of romantic improper origin, were left by him to sigh in vain. He bore himself towards them with the politest condescension, he was a seigneur surrounded by willing feminine retainers, yet he forbore to claim the smallest privilege of seigneurage. "It would," he confessed, when talking of those weeks in Half Moon Street, "have been like taking candy off a lot of babies. Rose, in strict propriety, was fair game to me as I was to her; but those others—no thank you. With them I have no regrets for my wasted opportunities."

But scrupulous as he was to take no advantage as Old Man of the Herd, worshiped by a palpitating entourage of silly women, of those whom he judged to be non-combatants, he cultivated opportunities for converse and gentle dalliance with Rose. To study her at close quarters was a professional duty, and if duty for once chanced to march with inclination, who was he to interpose complaints? She was an attractive study. He never did himself the honor to imagine that this sham lady's maid cherished any feelings of tenderness towards James the butler, or that she, far above him in origin and breeding, was stooping to conquer his affections. She was merely bent upon importing verisimilitude into the part which she was playing, and could do it no more effectively than by flirting with the butler in accordance with the unwritten constitution of the virtuous English home. A coy, unapproachable lady's maid, in presence of a butler with ducal claims, would have been an incredible perversion upon any well-regulated stage. And Rose, who had acted

as lady's maid at least five times previously, was a young person who was letter perfect in her job.

I fancy, too, that Mistress Rose had an eye to the future, to the psychological atmosphere in Half Moon Street after her contemplated flitting. It was well to leave behind stout believers in her integrity, or at least well-wishers who would not be desirous of pressing inquiries too relentlessly against her. We have seen how her former mistresses had been won over to defend her against the intrusive police, and if she could so gain the sympathies of those of her own hard, practical sex, how much the more easily might she win resolute adherents among weak sentimental men—like James. So Mistress Rose cuddled up to James—there is no other word for it—and frequently discovered occasion to chat with him in his pantry, and if his bold arm would slip around her neat waist, and his lips find satisfaction in meeting her lips, what, after all, were human arms and lips made for? I feel sure that she liked James, partly because, as herself a humbug, his assumption of the name and rank of the Montpensier-Mumpseys amused her mightily. "Good old James," she would warble as she playfully pulled his queer ears. "You are as much a duke as I am a dutchess. If you were a duke, no one would engage you as a butler; you would not be half fine enough." Which was pretty much the opinion also of Lady Evelyn McInnes.

The days fled by, and the seventeenth of March approached. Rose McLean's month was up and to-morrow she would receive her pay at the hands of James. That evening after bridge she had lingered saying good-night to the women and to James. The housemaids and John the boy were always sent away to bed early to clear the staff-room for the bridge party. "At threepence a hundred, James," observed Rose; "I have won three pounds four and twopence off you. You never seem to get any cards. Would it be convenient to pay me to-morrow?"

"Certainly," replied James. "I had my wages last week. But we shall have many more games, and perhaps my cards will improve."

"I hope that they will. You are a good sport. But to settle up as one goes is a sound plan."

"I am not going to pay, Ethel," said the cook stoutly; "I don't hold with gambling."

"You should have said that before you lost," grumbled the ill-

used table-maid, who had known all along that the cook and her money were not easily to be parted.

Dawson smiled to himself as he walked up to his own room. This little conversation fitted in like the last scrap of wood into a jig-saw puzzle. Mistress Rose was going to collect her bridge winnings on the morrow together with her wages and leave nothing behind except those unmarked clothes which could not be taken away. Until that moment James had not been quite sure that the program would be completed according to plan; now he was confident that the arrangements which he had made so carefully that very afternoon would not be thrown away. When Miss Rose on the morrow slipped up the area steps with the bag full of Lady Evelyn's jewels, she would not be unattended. He had appreciated her society during the past month, his stay in Half Moon Street as butler had been a most pleasant diversion; he had added yet one more skilled trade to his extensive repertoire; and now he was ready that the curtain should go up for the concluding scene. Had he known the bizarre climax to the play he would have been still more eager to get on with it.

The way of the fair transgressor had been thoughtfully made smooth. Dawson saw to her payment of wages, the exact sum for the exact month, and added upon his own account the accumulated bridge losses which had not wholly been the consequence of bad cards. The A.C. prevailed upon his cousin Evelyn to accompany him to a matinée, and the coast could not have been clearer if Rose herself had had the sweeping of it. She was easy in mind. Lady Evelyn trusted her implicitly, as all her temporary mistresses had trusted her; James was an old fool—rather a dear in his ducal way, yet still an old fool. The one man connected with the household of whom Rose was rather afraid was Se'noaks, whose official position at the Yard was too well known to have escaped her eye. She was not sorry that his desire to entertain Lady Evelyn had coincided with her own imminent departure; he would be safely out of the house. It is not often that anyone gets the opportunity to strip a dressing-case of jewelry under the nose of an Assistant Commissioner of detective police. Present he was a grave danger; absent a stimulus to piquant humor.

Rose McLean did not think fit to leave the house until about four o'clock in the afternoon. Dawson, who had anticipated an earlier flitting, was becoming almost anxious when he heard her

feet shod with outdoor shoes tap upon the kitchen stairs, and caught a glimpse of her smart, well-dressed figure as she passed the pantry door. She went out by the servants' way and climbed the area steps. There was a car or two moving in Half Moon Street and one standing at the Curzon Street end in front of the Christian Science Church. Rose turned towards Piccadilly, walking briskly along. The leather despatch case which she carried did not appear to be heavy. Just then the car by the Church of Christian Science got moving and swung from Half Moon Street into Piccadilly, about twenty yards behind her. The car looked like a taxi, though it had no taximeter, and the man inside might have been a fare, though as a matter of fact he wasn't.

Dawson, squinting sideways out of the dining-room window of number 20A, saw the police car pass and knew that thenceforward there was nothing for him except to wait. Which, after all, is the principal job of so accomplished a butler. He returned to his pantry, seated himself with a story of his own adventures before the gas fire, and listened patiently for the telephone bell to ring. He was not going to allow anyone but himself to take calls that afternoon. "I am glad it was Pudden-headed Wilson's car," thought he. "Wilson is not a man to get hung up by engine trouble at a critical moment." So Dawson pondered; he had ordered out three cars and had disposed them strategically, so that one was sure to be ready to move, without the need of turning, whether Mistress Rose walked towards Piccadilly or proceeded eastwards or westwards along Curzon Street. Each of the three means of exit was watched from an appropriately placed car which could move immediately upon her trail. These cars were Dawson's first precautionary line; there were supporting them other lines with which one need not trouble the reader. The instant that Rose left 20A she walked unconsciously into a police bag net, wide and strong enough to hold the slipperiest gang of crooks in London. By such practical compliments did Dawson reveal his deep respect for her evasive qualities.

Half an hour after Rose McLean had made her flitting, attended by the police car, the telephone bell rang at number 20A.

"Wilson speaking. Is that C. I. W. D.?"

"Yes," cried Dawson eagerly. "Is it all right?"

"In one way quite all right," replied Wilson cautiously. "But in another way very rummy biz. The rummiest biz. I was

ever on. I can't give any details over the public 'phone, sir. When shall I come round to Half Moon Street?"

"What do you mean by all right?" enquired Dawson testily. "Have you got her?"

"In a way we have, sir. In another way, we haven't," replied Pudden-head Wilson to his raging Chief. "She has gone to earth in a big house in the Finchley Road. My man is there now with the car. The two cars which followed us from Curzon Street are up and down the road. I have called up two constables and they are watching front and back. I obeyed your orders to the letter, sir, though they weren't really necessary. I know who the lady is and can put my hand on her any minute. That is what makes the biz. so very rummy."

"Oh, this is hopeless," growled Dawson. "Come round here sharp at six-thirty, when the A.C. and Lady Evelyn will be back. Till then track every man, woman, and child who comes out of that house in the Finchley Road; watch every cat and mouse. It will take a smarter man than you to put salt on that woman's tail. If you need any more help, call for it; I have full powers. If she gets away after you have run her to earth, I will have you broken, Wilson."

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir," replied Wilson, and rung off.

"So that's that," grunted Dawson. "Good so far as it goes, but not good enough. I have half a mind to take personal charge; I would if that ass Wilson had told me the number of the blasted house in the Finchley Road."

So, not knowing the number in a road about a couple of miles long, and having no present means of finding out, Dawson remained on duty as James the butler and awaited with what patience he could the return of his mistress and Sydney Se'noaks from the theater.

James admitted them in his perfect manner, but as Lady Evelyn walked into the hall he permitted himself the first lapse from his assumed character since the moment that he had put it on. James—it grieves me to write the words—James winked at the A.C. and moved his head ever so slightly towards the dining-room.

"One minute, Evelyn," cried the A.C., who now for the first time knew positively that James was Dawson. "Please come into the dining-room. James has important news for us."

Presently they were together with the door shut.

"My lady," said James, in the smooth, toneless voice of his

efficient butlerhood, "I regret to report that Rose McLean left this house at half-past four carrying a leather despatch case. I am afraid that in that case reposed all your jewelry. I had expected, my lady, that she would rob you in just this manner."

Lady Evelyn gasped and sat down. "Then why in goodness, James, did you not stop her?"

"It was no part of my duty to stop your maid, my lady."

"James," replied my lady, "you are an admirable butler, but in every other respect you are a fool."

"Yes, my lady," returned James.

The A.C. grinned. "Evelyn," said he, "don't you think that if you went upstairs you might soon discover whether James' suspicions are well founded?"

She went without further words. In a few minutes she returned, so little upset by the disaster as to have taken occasion to remove her outdoor things and tidy up her hair.

"Yes. You are quite right, James. Everything has gone except one or two cherished mementoes which Mistress Rose never saw. It is a lucky thing that my valuable trinkets are all stumers."

"What!" shouted the A.C. "To my certain knowledge, Evelyn, you had fifteen thousand pounds' worth. That pearl necklace of yours cost eight thousand by itself."

"I had, Sydney. But I have been paying income tax out of my jewel-box for years. As they go I have copies made and, 'pon my soul, I never can tell the difference between the copies and the originals. Those Japanese culture pearls which Rose has walked off with would defy any examinations except by X-rays. I am a woman of great wisdom, Sydney. I am not going to waste my income on taxes so long as I have jewelry to dispose of. There is a bit of stuff at the bank still. What annoys me most is that I am left without the best maid I ever had. Do you think that if I forgave her she would come back?"

The A.C. clutched his hair. "I forget for the moment," said he, "whether you are proposing to compound a felony or only a misdemeanor; it is one or the other and utterly lawless."

"I never worry about the law," said Lady Evelyn easily—"no woman does. I will compound any old crime to get Rose back. At the worst I shall still have James."

"I am afraid that you won't," observed the A.C. grimly.

"It happens that James is Chief Inspector Dawson, of Scotland Yard, and my meat."

Then Lady Evelyn broke down. She had borne with easy philosophy the loss of all her faked jewelry, and had endured the prospect of a life stripped of her genuine pearl of a lady's maid, but to learn on the top of that that she was to be bereft of her James, her Montpensier, her Bertram Mumpsey—about whom she had bragged to all her jealous friends—it was too much. She took out a handkerchief and ostentatiously mopped her eyes.

"I simply don't believe you, Sydney," mumbled she. "Nobody could buttle like James who had not been born in a pantry and taken pap out of silver spoons. His figure alone would prove you to be a liar, Sydney."

"Padding, my lady," murmured James.

"But your face, James, the vraisemblance of a butler?"

"Made up, my lady."

"But your deportment, your air, your sublime condescension?"

"Copied, my lady."

"James," proclaimed Lady Evelyn, "you are a villain. You are a deceiver of trusting women. I never believed that you were a duke—you are much too truly ducal—but I did think that you were an honest butler. Go, James, I dismiss you from my service."

"If your ladyship would permit me to remain until your ladyship were suited . . ."

"James, you affect me almost to tears. I shall never look upon your like again and from this moment shall not try. I have done with butlers for ever. After you no second best would content me. And now," went on Lady Evelyn, laughing, "now that you two fiends with your plots have smashed up my happy home, what are you going to do about Rose McLean? Perhaps you will kindly explain, Sydney, how you came to introduce a thief into my house? It was all your doing."

"It was," confessed he, taking his courage in both hands. Then he proceeded to explain the whole game which he and Dawson had been playing under her unseeing eyes. "It was a scandalous abuse of friendship," he admitted, casting himself upon her mercy. "We made use of your house and of your jewels—which we did not know were sham—as a well-baited

trap. We induced Rose McLean to come so that Dawson, in the character of James, might watch her day and night."

"I hope that he did not continue his watchfulness far into the dark hours," said Lady Evelyn drily. James averted his modest eyes.

Just then the front-door bell rang, and James, slipping out, returned as the perfect butler announcing an honored guest. "Mr. Wilson desires to see your ladyship."

"Who is Mr. Wilson?"

"He is another of my men," whispered the A.C.

"Oh, bring him in," snapped her ladyship. "As you have made of my house an annexe to Scotland Yard, I must leave it at your disposal. Am I to be allowed to have dinner at the usual time or must I pick a bit of offal at my club?"

James looked shocked. "I shall have the honor to announce dinner at eight o'clock precisely, my lady. And to wait upon you, as usual. Mr. Wilson, my lady."

Pudden-headed Wilson stalked in, looked round, and paused in some embarrassment. "I had an appointment, sir, with Chief Inspector Dawson."

"Well, there he is," responded the A.C., with official curtness.

Wilson glared at James. "No, sir," said he firmly; "I have been kidded before that way. That fat image is not the Chief Inspector. I will wait, sir, until he comes."

"Will you?" growled Dawson in his sergeant-major voice. "Just you stand at attention, Pudden-head, my man, and cough up your story!"

Wilson rocked upon his feet. Lady Evelyn thoughtfully pushed a chair towards him.

"Sit down, Mr. Wilson. This is my house. As for you, James-Dawson or Dawson-James, don't you presume to give orders to my guests." She purred over Wilson in deepest sympathy. "I suppose that butler of mine there is your Chief Inspector. Mr. Se'noaks says that he is. No wonder that you are a bit staggered. I am all of a twitter myself. James, please get Mr. Wilson a whiskey and soda."

"Yes, my lady," said James obediently, though while he served the refreshment Wilson trembled violently. He felt, had he realized it, much as Fair Rosamond felt when Queen Eleanor handed her out a little drink.

"Now, Evelyn, with your permission we will get on with it,"

said the A.C. wrathfully, as he saw discipline crumbling before his eyes. "We will take your report, Wilson."

Then Wilson told his story and intently they held their ears. It was, as he described it, a rummy biz.

"I saw the girl with a bag come up out of the area of Number 20A Half Moon Street. She walked towards Piccadilly. My engine was warm and started with the first touch. I followed, keeping her in sight until she turned towards Hyde Park Corner. When I got sight of her again she was standing by a big Daimler, a private car. The driver opened the door for her, touched his cap, and went back to the wheel. I ran over to the open side of Piccadilly and stopped. The Daimler started off west, turned up north at the Corner, and then headed north-west along the Edgware Road. I followed about twenty yards behind. I took the number of the Daimler. The Curzon Street cars, as soon as they knew I was off, came after me in line.

"Nothing happened until we got well up the Finchley Road, out West Hampstead way. There was a fine big house standing back a bit from the road. It had a short drive curving from the gates round by the front door. Beside the house was a garage and maybe an acre or so of garden at the back and side. A gentleman's house all proper. The Daimler went in. I stopped just short of the gates so that I could see up the drive to the front door. The girl with the bag, whom I had watched come up the area steps of 20A Half Moon Street, got out of the car and opened that door with her own latchkey. I saw her with my own eyes. The Daimler backed down and went into the garage.

"I took up two constables and set them to watch the front and a side door; it was a corner house. I left my car there, too, with my man, who had all along been inside. Then I went to the nearest telephone call-office and spoke to the Chief Inspector here. I did not think it safe to say much, though I had begun to think a lot. I put through inquiries of the constables, at the police-station, the post-office, and a shop or two. I had the registered number of the Daimler looked up. Meanwhile the house was kept under close observation. The girl with the bag did not come out again. One of my men saw her for a minute at an upstair front window. It looked like one of the best rooms in the house. She wasn't a servant in that house, sirs and your ladyship."

"Rose McLean is a lady born and bred," observed Dawson. "I spotted her for the real goods at once."

"That house," went on Wilson, his eyes brightening as he observed the interest of his audience—"that house is the property of Mr. Morrison Poundbury, the Chairman of the Prudential Banking Company, Ltd. It is an important bank, though not one of the big Five. He is well-to-do. His wife goes out a lot and is known as a first-rate bridge player, for a lady. The Daimler is Mr. Poundbury's car. I found out who it was the driver of the car took up to the front door and who went in with her own latchkey."

"Well, who was it?" snarled Dawson. He hated that a mere subordinate, a Pudden-headed Wilson, should pause for dramatic effect just as he would have done himself.

"It was Mrs. Morrison Poundbury."

"Impossible!" ejaculated Lady Evelyn. "I have seen Mrs. Poundbury once or twice."

"Maybe," snapped Dawson, "but then she wasn't labeled as a lady's maid. Are you sure, Wilson?"

"Certain sure, sir. The driver of the car said so. And I saw her walk in with her own latchkey. With my own eyes I saw her. Besides, what was she doing titivating up her hair in the best bedroom if she wasn't the mistress of the house? That girl with the bag is Mrs. Morrison Poundbury. It is a rummy biz., the very rummiest that I have ever been on."

"I will call upon her to-morrow," said Dawson shortly. "Meanwhile keep up a close watch on the house. Though if she is Mrs. Poundbury we can put our hands on her whenever we please."

"Just what I said to you on the 'phone, sir," observed Wilson complacently.

IV

MRS. MORRISON POUNDBURY

At eleven o'clock next morning Captain Dawson, R.M.L.I., stood upon the steps of the big house in the Finchley Road into which Rose McLean had disappeared on the previous afternoon. The watch which he had maintained at front and back assured him positively that she had not come out. Except for the absence of a mustache—even Dawson could not grow one in twelve hours and he never under any circumstances wore false hair—he was the slightly gray, weather-beaten officer who had

traveled north from Euston to become a member of the Unemployed Committee and to blossom into an understudy of the Prime Minister.

He sent in his card. The maid who took it to her mistress—it irked Dawson slightly to observe that Rose had no butler with whose bearing to compare his own professional perfection—presently returned. Her mistress had not the pleasure of Captain Dawson's acquaintance and desired to be informed of his business. There was an ominous grin upon Dawson's face as he took the card and wrote upon it, "Introduced by the Hon. Sydney Se'noaks." It was a declaration of war which Rose McLean would instantly appreciate.

Dawson was shown into a morning-room where Mrs. Morrison Poundbury was sitting by the fire reading a sprightly morning journal. She turned her head as the maid opened the door. "Excuse me for a moment, sir," said she; "I am in the middle of a fascinating murder trial."

Dawson stood regarding her intently. Mrs. Poundbury was Rose McLean beyond a doubt. She was differently though not more becomingly dressed than she had been as Lady Evelyn's maid, and she had the same air of self-possessed competence. Whatever may have been her apprehensions at Dawson's visit, she permitted no sign of them to appear. As an opponent, Dawson felt that Rose was worthy of him, and his heart warmed to her.

She rose, tossed the newspaper aside, and turned upon Dawson. "Captain Dawson," asked she, "are you fond of murders?"

"No," he replied grimly. "They are usually messy and always mean. I prefer a bold, clean robbery."

She smiled and invited him to take a seat by the fire. She then resumed her own place with her back to the light. Dawson felt, rather than saw, her eyes bore into him out of the shadows. It suddenly occurred to him to test her powers of observation and deliberately to offer to her a well-lighted view of his profile. Her quick gasp of recognition made him smile.

"James," murmured Rose McLean, her voice thrilling plaintively in the fashion which he knew so well. "I almost believed you when you assured me that ears like those were hereditary in the Royal Family of France. Like the Habsburg lip. I never believed that you were really a Montpensier, and now I fear that you are not even a Mumpsey. And I almost loved you, James."

"Madam," replied Dawson, "I fully expected that you would recognize me, though you are only the second person within my experience who has been able to do so at sight. But then you have had unusually favorable opportunities of studying the artificial contour of my ears."

"James," sighed Rose, "if this be our last private interview, as I sadly fear it may be, let us remain upon the terms of agreeable intimacy which relieved the horrid monotony of Half Moon Street. It would have been a long month without you, James."

"Why did you stick it out?" inquired he curiously. "You might have walked away with Lady Evelyn's jewelry almost any afternoon and the trap would not have been set to catch you. It was your persistence in routine which brought about your capture, Rose."

"Am I caught? Yes, I suppose that I am. I saw a car follow me and strange men, obviously intent upon concealing their purpose—though not very expert at their job—have been hanging about ever since. The pitcher which goes too often to the well gets broken at the last. This was the seventh time, James."

"I thought that it was no more than the sixth," answered he. "Excuse me if I press my inquiry. Why did you serve out your full month?"

Her eyes opened with something in them of the wonder of a child.

"If I had not served my month I should not have got my wages."

"Did the wages matter to you?"

"Of course they did. The money wasn't much, but I had earned it hardly. It is not precisely a pleasant job to serve as lady's maid to a cantankerous female, especially when she is one's social inferior. Not Lady Evelyn, of course. She is quite a dear. But some of those others, newly gilded and never thickly gilt enough to conceal the baseness of the metal underneath. I jolly well earned my wages, James, and I was not going to leave until I had them safely in my pocket. An honest workwoman is worthy of her hire," she added virtuously.

"Your regular procedure made it rather easy for us," observed James sadly. "Believe me, Rose, I was genuinely sorry to have to run you in."

"I believe you, James," explained she heartily. "You with your Montpensier pedigree and your Royal Blood entertained me vastly. I spotted that part of you as humbug from the first,

though I did think that you were a butler all right. There were times when I had my doubts. Between these four walls, James, I may confess that you were altogether too virtuous, too negligent of your amorous opportunities. Those women were just aching to be made love to, James."

"I have a wife, Rose," explained Dawson gloomily.

"Well, for the matter of that I have a husband. But I have never permitted his existence to be a burden. Thanks to you, I had a pleasant month in Half Moon Street; your gallantry, too cautious to be typically French, none the less afforded me genuine entertainment. And some gratification, James. I more than suspected the wife in the background, but was pleased to note that there were interludes in your recollection of her existence."

"I was a sad dog," said Dawson, trying to pump up repentance for his sins, yet conscious of the lamentable failure. "That month in service together was all too short. Had I been as young as sometimes I felt, I might have given you the tip to be off out of the net. But at my age business comes before pleasure. Though I loved you I had you tracked to this house and now the hand of Scotland Yard is upon you."

"Who are you really, James?" asked Rose McLean.

He told her, and observed with delight the pluck of her. Confronted by the certainty of arrest for her manifold crimes against the sanctity of private property, she still could smile and her voice lost none of its sweetness.

"It is a pity, Rose," said Dawson at last. "This is the end of your career of crime. And now between ourselves, in all confidence as lady's maid and butler—not as criminal and police officer—tell me why a woman like you, the wife of a bank chairman, took to jewel robbery in this amazingly efficient fashion. I know that you have carried through the same plan six times—you say seven. Why did you do it? To me it seems stark lunacy."

"Oh, no," she replied, settling down comfortably into her chair, lighting a cigarette and offering Dawson one of her husband's Coronas. "There was no lunacy about it. I am a collector of beautiful stones, and I couldn't afford to buy them. You see," she went on, like some eager child anxious to explain the obvious to an unintelligent grown-up, "my husband, though chairman of the Prudential Banking Company, is not very rich. Just comfortably off. I have some money and he

allows me some more. Enough to dress upon and to pay my bridge debts; I do not lose much that way, though the stakes are usually higher than our threepence a hundred. I love stones, especially pearls and diamonds, yet can't afford to buy many of them. I go about and see women plastered with them who a few years ago were serving behind the counter of a small shop. The war enriched the wrong people, James. I hate to see beautiful stones wasted upon women who don't know how to wear them, so I thought that I would restore the balance of justice by getting them for myself. I do know how to wear them.

"I was sorry to rob Lady Evelyn—she is the genuine article; but I did want her pearl necklace so very, very badly. Perhaps my finer feelings have become dulled. At the beginning I would never have touched Lady Evelyn's necklace. After a course of robbing profiteers' women, who, you will allow, were fair game for the most honest of jewelless New Poor, I made a shot at Lady Evelyn. It was a rotten thing to do, and I am really very sorry that I did it. Not because you have caught me. She was worthy to wear what she had got; those others were not worthy. Garnet and jet were their proper line of goods, not diamonds or pearls. You wouldn't call robbing creatures like that a real crime, would you, James?"

"The law calls it a crime," said Dawson uneasily.

"Phut!" exclaimed Rose. "What care I for the stupid old law! It has got hold of me and I must submit to its power, but I don't value it a rap."

"As an officer of the law, who sees the absurdity of it from the inside, I sometimes feel that way myself. I have broken out in revolt." Then, in strict confidence, as between born crooks, in full sympathy with one another, he related briefly his exploits as Mr. Cholmondeley Jones, journalist, author, and smuggler of liqueur whiskey at thirty degrees over proof. Rose did not care for whiskey, and Dawson had no lust for precious stones, yet the pair of them felt drawn together in common revolt against legal oppression. "The law cramps one horribly," said Dawson as he concluded.

"It does," she sighed. "I suppose that there will be no eighth exploit for me."

"I am afraid not, Rose," replied Dawson sadly.

Warmed by his confidence, Rose McLean bubbled over with particulars concerning her methods and career.

"I saw very quickly," said she, "that the way to clear off with the ill-gotten stones of those profiteers' women was to engage in their service as lady's maid. It was easy enough to manage the time, for my husband and I go our own ways. Sometimes I said that I was paying a visit to friends, sometimes that I was going abroad. I have been lady's maiding for seven months out of twenty-four. The difficulty was to get plausible references. I had to take risks. Among my acquaintances with whom I played bridge at my club was more than one who had lost considerable sums to me. I let their debts run on until I had occasion for the service of the debtors. Then one by one I made use of them. I explained that I wished to do a good turn to a maid who was an admirable servant, but who had got into a trouble which cut her off from references by previous employers. I supplied names—different each time—and particulars—also different each time. I regret to say that the fault of my fictitious maids usually was that not uncommon one of throwing their caps over the windmill under the stimulus of war patriotism. It was a fault which compelled sympathy. My debtors proved willing to give recommendations of maids whom they had never seen, and, as a return for their complacency, I wrote off their bridge debts to me. I was the maids; it sounds rather ungrammatical.

"When I first went out in this way I was frightened of detection. Suppose, thought I, I stumble against someone who knows Mrs. Morrison Poundbury! More than once I did, yet nothing happened. I was a being with the label of maid upon me and any resemblance to Mrs. Morrison Poundbury passed without remark. Does one ever look at a maid as if she were a fellow-being of like flesh? I doubt it. Women, whom I had met in my proper person, looked through me when I confronted them in my sober habit as maid. Upon each occasion I aroused no suspicion; I gained the favor and confidence of my mistresses, and I walked out of their employment with a bag of jewelry upon the completion of my first month. My references might have become more than suspicious of the truth had they put their heads together when questions concerning the flitting maids were fired at them. But they stood isolated. They were not likely to tell anyone of the low-down part which they had themselves played in the business. I could have gone on indefinitely if it had not been for you, James. What impelled you to lay a trap for me?"

"The insurance people," explained Dawson. "Ladies with valuable jewelry generally have the sense to insure it. When these cases of robberies by lady's maids came to be set one beside another they were plainly the work of one woman. So we fixed up that she should come to Half Moon Street and that I should accompany her as butler. Lady Evelyn knew nothing of the trap. You fell into it like a woolly lamb."

"I overlooked the insurance people," sighed Rose.

"There always is a snag which one overlooks," sighed Dawson sympathetically.

"And now what is to be done?" asked Rose McLean briskly. "I must furbish up my brain-box, for it really seems as if Mrs. Morrison Poundbury were in a bit of a mess. If I could go to prison as Rose McLean it would not matter so much; I could then come out without a stain upon Mrs. Poundbury's fair character. I have had my fun and I suppose must pay the bill. When I come out I shall have the stones to console me. I shall have fairly earned them then."

"I am afraid not," murmured Dawson.

"What!" For the first time in this remarkable interview Rose showed the alarm which possessed her. She could face the prospect of imprisonment with a gallant smile, but she quailed and went white at the possibility of being bereft of her hardly-won spoil. "Surely not, James. If I go to prison I shall have done my bit; I shall have paid in suffering for the stones which I have taken. The law would not be so unfairly cruel as to punish me twice, once with prison, and again by robbing me of my stones. It is unthinkable."

"But don't you see that the stones are not yours?" explained Dawson patiently, as to the clever child which she was in essence. "The underwriters who have paid claims for their loss will want the jewelry back as some sort of salvage. Your going to prison is just punishment for your naughtiness, Rose."

"Yes. But I ought not to be punished twice," persisted she.

"That is the law," said Dawson gloomily.

"I can't believe it," cried Rose. "They are such lovely stones and I have suffered so much to get them. Seven months of lady's maiding—it seemed like years. And now perhaps seven more months of horrid prison."

She looked inquiringly at Dawson. "More likely seven years," he groaned.

Then Rose McLean fell silent. The smooth lines of her

young face—she was little more than twenty-five—crumpled and her skin grayed over like that of a corpse. It was all so very much worse than she had anticipated in her blackest dreams.

"Have you got them here?" asked Dawson gently, after a long silence.

"Yes," said Rose, forcing herself to smile painfully. "They are in my own room. Come."

They ascended the stairs and entered Mrs. Poundbury's sitting-room, brightly lighted now by the early spring sunshine. She unlocked a tall music-cabinet and pulled out, one after another, seven drawers. All were filled with jewel-cases. With fantastic method she had allotted a separate drawer to the proceeds of each robbery. Here in this room she could turn over her spoils, so hardly won with lady's maid service, pour the stones into heaps, and gloat as a miser over her treasures. She was incapable of selling a single trinket, and was cut off from wearing any of them even in the privacy of her own home. They were just spoils to be cherished in secret.

"It is like secret drinking," muttered Dawson.

"What do you mean?' asked Rose listlessly. She had not the courage now to open a single case lest the loved beauty of the contents should break utterly the bruised reed of her heart.

"It is a disease, I suppose," explained Dawson. "A disease like drink or drug-taking. To sit here and run your fingers over jewelry which you dare not wear and will not sell. You have about a hundred thousand pounds' worth of stuff locked up there which is no sort of use to you or to anyone else. You are sane in your methods, Rose, but all the same I think that you must be quite mad."

"You won't take them from me, James," implored she. "It will be quite easy. All this is in strict confidence between me and you. I will hire a safe this morning with one of the Deposit Companies and take all these stones down in my car. They shall be locked up until—until—I come out. Then I will bring them back to this room. I shall have fairly earned them by then, shall I not, James?" Her face twisted as if she were on the edge of tears.

"And while you are on your way to the safe deposit," said Dawson gently, for his heart was very tender towards her, "you will be followed by a police car. The depository of your spoils will be known to the police and they will obtain an order of

the Court requiring their production. It is no use planning any more, Rose. These stones, for which you have committed seven robberies, are as completely gone from you as if you had thrown them into the deep sea. The law will strip you of them."

"I have nothing left but my wages," said she, and led the way back to the morning-room.

They were seated once more before the pleasant fire. Rose, who had recovered something of her happy self-possession, smiled upon Dawson as if he were the butler of Half Moon Street and not a police officer charged with her arrest and the cunning author of all her present misfortunes. He it was who baited the trap in Half Moon Street and had woven about her the strong net from which there was no breaking. Yet she felt no resentment. He was as gentle with her now as he always had been in Half Moon Street; he was one who had sinned himself against the law and was filled with sympathy towards fellow-sinners. He was still the dear old James who had called himself Bertram Mumpsey or Montpensier of the Royal Blood of France. She eyed him almost lovingly and the old smile flickered about her lips.

"James," said she at last, "it was kind of you to come for me yourself and not to send some harsh, strange policeman. Now that my stones for which I worked so hard are gone, I don't care much what happens to myself. I am sorry for my husband, for though I don't love him and never did, he has always treated me well. It will be awkward for the chairman of a bank to have a wife in prison. Still, after all, it will be worse for the wife. We were married in Scotland, so perhaps my husband will be able to divorce me on the ground of desertion. I shall not mind that much. What are you going to do with me?"

"I have been thinking hard," replied he slowly. "All the jewelry is safe; that is something. And you seem to me, Rose, to be scarcely responsible for your actions where stones come in to warp your senses. I suppose you don't look upon yourself as a thief?"

"A thief!" cried she indignantly. "I have never stolen a halfpenny in my life. You insult me, James."

He smiled rather sadly. What was she other than a pretty, soft-voiced child with a child's passion for shining toys! "If you had made away with a single one of those bits of stuff," said

he, "I could do nothing for you. As it is . . . Look here, Rose. I must have Lady Evelyn's little lot at once. I will return them to her." He did not tell Rose that they were all stumers; that would have been too cruel. "I don't think that Lady Evelyn will prosecute you, though Se'noaks will try his damnedest to make her. I will put in a word for you. We are not without influence with her, you and I, Rose. Then for those other things. We will put them all up in a big portmanteau and take them away in the police car which is outside. The contents of five of those drawers belong to the underwriters, and those other jewel-cases, in the seventh drawer which I know nothing about, shall be returned whence they came. You will let me have the name of the owner?"

She nodded wearily.

"In this fashion, in so far as we can, you will have made complete restitution. For the rest, it will depend on the human kindness of the sufferers, who suffer no longer, and upon such pressure as I may be able to exert. I have made up my mind to save you from prison if I can bring it about. Prison!" he roared contemptuously. "What in blazes is the use of prison in a case like this! What will you, a pretty child now, be like after years and years of filthy prison? Rose, I always hated prisons, and when I think of you in a white cold cell, your lovely hair which I have kissed cut off"—her hands went up to her head—"your shapely figure outraged by contact with shapeless prison dresses"—she shuddered within her present clothing—"your hands"—he caught them in his—"coarsened by prison work, when I picture in my mind all these horrors which hang so closely over you, I could do a tidy bit of crime myself to win you clear. Now, Rose, we will just pack up those jewel-cases and make off with them. We will account for every one of them. And I will strain all the influence I possess to save you from the legal consequences of your goings-on. If I were a psychologist—I never had any proper schooling—I might undersand how so clever a little devil as you can also be such a silly idiot as to worship stones."

"They are very lovely, James," whispered she. "Men don't understand their loveliness."

"A good thing for us," grunted Dawson. "I shall libel you more than a little, Rose. I shall tell Lady Evelyn, and the underwriters, and the owner of those blasted things in the seventh drawer, that you are *non compos* and would be acquitted

on the ground of insanity. And so you ought to be. If you are sane, then William Dawson is a dodderer. I can't promise anything; it will be a tough job; but I will get you off if I can. Wait a minute, though. No hankey-panky, my lass. If I save you, it will be under a faithful promise not to play the same game again. You must become a teetotaller in jewelry from this day onwards. Will you promise, Rose?"

"I will promise you, James, though I wouldn't make any promises to the stupid old Law."

"Good. This is the end of the journey. No more goings out as lady's maid and no more flittings with the plunder on the day when your wages are paid. That must stop for always. If you fail me in this promise, Rose, I give you my solemn word that I will have you prosecuted for all those seven robberies, every one of them. Dawson is not made a fool of with impunity. And now we will empty out those bonny drawers and I will wish you good day."

They stood together before the fire. "You are better than a French Royalty," whispered she, in that birdlike voice of hers. "They were ever a paltry, ungrateful lot. You are my parfait gentil knight, James, in this room, just as you were in that pantry yonder."

"I might have been knighted in the war," said he proudly.

"Bah!" cried Rose. "I meant a real knight of ancient chivalry, not a pinchbeck K.B.E. Sir James, salute your lady."

She raised her face to him and he kissed her for the last time. It was a lovely kiss.

"I never thought," murmured Rose, "that it would be so—so thrilling—to be kissed—by a policeman."

"We are in all ways a most competent Force," said Dawson laughing.

* * * * * * *

Dawson, as usually happened, worked his will. Mrs. Morrison Poundbury still lives unharmed in the big house in the Finchley Road. Her husband cannot understand why she so resolutely refuses all his proffered gifts of jewelry. She knows, what Dawson suspected, that for her disease total abstinence is the sole remedy.

THREE DEAD MEN

EDEN PHILLPOTTS *was born at Mount Aboo in India, the son of Captain Henry Phillpotts of the Native Infantry and Political Agent, on November 4, 1862. He was educated at Plymouth, England; and from the years 1880 to 1890 held a clerkship in the Sun Fire Insurance Company. When he first came to London he studied for the stage, but soon abandoned this early ambition. His first two books were "Some Everyday Talks" (1893) and "Down Dartmouth Way" (1894); and these were followed by "Lying Prophets" (1896) and "Children of the Mist" (1898), which definitely established his literary reputation as a chronicler of Devonshire life. Novels by him appeared regularly thereafter, and to-day there are in the neighborhood of forty volumes bearing his name.*

A certain uniformity of atmosphere and appeal characterized Phillpotts' writings until the publication of "The Grey Room" in 1921—a book which marked a radical departure from his earlier works. This detective story, which centered about an old Florentine bed, was followed by "The Red Redmaynes" in 1922, and "A Voice from the Dark" (1925), two other detective novels of a high order; and then came "Jig-Saw" (1926), a fourth successful venture in detective fiction. The novels of crime-detection by Harrington Hext seem closely related in context and style to those of Mr. Phillpotts: they are "The Thing at Their Heels" (1923), "Who Killed Cock Robin?" (1924), and "The Monster" (1925).

The story, "Three Dead Men," which is highly characteristic of Mr. Phillpotts' detective fiction, appeared in a volume of miscellaneous tales entitled "Peacock House," published by Macmillan early in 1927.

THREE DEAD MEN

By Eden Phillpotts

I

When Michael Duveen, the Inquiry Agent, invited me to go to the West Indies on a special mission, I rejoiced exceedingly, for the time was late January, London suffered from abominable weather and the prospect of even a few weeks in the tropics presented very real attraction.

"They offer me ten thousand pounds to go," explained Duveen, "and if it meant anything less than ten days at sea I should be pleased to do so. I've a drop of black blood in me myself, you know, and always feel some sympathy with the Ethiopians. But the sea and I are bitter enemies and I'm too old to renew our feuds. I have told them, however, that I shall send one in whom I place absolute confidence; that I shall devote personal attention to the subject from this side; and that, if we solve the mystery for them, a fee of five thousand will content me; while if we fail to do so, I shall ask nothing but your expenses. I hear to-day by cable that they are satisfied with these conditions, and I invite you, therefore, to sail in the Royal Mail Steam Packet 'Don' from Southampton on Wednesday next."

"Delighted, chief."

"It will be a feather in your cap if you make anything of the business. The data are involved and one cannot build the most shadowy theory of what occurred upon them. Indeed I shall not trouble you with these voluminous but vague documents. You go with an open and an empty mind, for if I hand you this screed you'll be puzzling at it all the way to Barbados and possibly arrive with some cut-and-dried idea that will stand in your way before you begin. It's a criminal case on the face of it, and involves three dead men, but apparently nobody who is alive. Quite interesting and, I should say, quite difficult; but

that's only an impression. You may clear it up yourself without much trouble; or you may put me in a position to do so from England; or it may beat us both. See me again before you go, and book your passage to-day, otherwise you won't get a comfortable berth. There's a great rush to the West Indies this year."

"Where am I to go?"

"Only with the home ship to Barbados. The case lies in that island alone, so far as I know. Should you have to go farther afield, of course you will do so. Good luck, my friend. I hope it's something that may prove useful to you, and I feel sanguine of your success."

I thanked the great man and withdrew well pleased, for Duveen's compliments were few and far between. He never praised, but his satisfaction took shape of work, and I knew very well that he had not chosen me for what sounded to be a fairly important investigation without assurance that I should do justice to his international name.

A fortnight later there came a morning when I lounged on the deserted deck of the "Don" and watched a glorious blending of moonlight and dawn. Gazing into the east about four o'clock, I saw a faint wave of rose-color first touch the sky and quickly change to purest white and palest saffron. But as yet the moon was mistress of her domain; the stars shone brightly; the false Southern Cross sparkled undimmed, and the true constellation twinkled low upon the horizon of the sea. Then came a speedy change. Great flakes and splashes of orange light broke the east; the gray moonlight grew warm and feeble; one by one the stars went out and the Southern Cross was swallowed by the dawn.

Barbados had been for some time visible, flying like a huge sea monster between the flashing white light on Ragged Point and a crimson beacon above a farther promontory; but now the sun climbed up heaven, as only he climbs in the tropics, and the island was limned in every detail under his tremendous blaze. I saw low, undulating, cultivated lands, whereon the miles of sugar-cane looked at first like fields of grass-green wheat or barley; I noted the windmills, the dotted dwellings and brown, tilled earth; while beneath them, crowned with palms that clustered to the shore, spread Bridgetown, with its gleaming masses of white architecture beside the blue waters and sun-bleached beaches.

The liner took her stately course through a crowd of lesser craft, where a hundred lighters and gay shore boats awaited her; she threaded Carlisle Bay, dipped her red ensign to a little man-of-war, and then fired her gun, to let it be known that she had arrived at the appointed hour.

A fleet of lighters manned with men of every hue, from mahogany to brown, from yellow to putty-color, was soon about us, while dozens of smaller vessels crowded in when the shore authorities were satisfied. The sun blazed; the steam-winches groaned and chattered; people rushed hither and thither shaking hands and saying farewell, gathering luggage and tipping stewards ere they departed.

Then came a message for me, and presently my trunk and kit-bags were lowered into a smart white dinghy with crimson cushions.

A good-looking man sat in it and greeted me pleasantly while two negroes pulled the boat ashore. He was browned by the tropic sun, but his gray eyes, fair hair and clean-cut cast of features proclaimed him an Englishman. He was tall, well built, and dressed in black clothes, which somewhat concealed his size and muscular development. He might have been forty-five, but life in Barbados had tended to age him, and I learned presently that he was no more than five and thirty.

Amos Slanning, owner of the famous "Pelican" plantations and sugar factories, chatted as we rowed ashore; but he spoke with an object and gave me various items of information that served as preliminary to the story he was to tell.

"Barbados," he said, "unlike most of the West Indies, has had a fairly peaceful history. An English ship took possession of it in 1605, and it has never changed hands since. There's no more loyal corner of the Empire than 'Bimshire,' as we call this island. My family has been connected with it since the great Rebellion, for at that time a good number of broken royalists fled hither, and the Slannings were of the party. Those refugees established monarchical principles pretty firmly, and they still obtain, though perhaps we Barbadians exaggerate a little our importance in the total of things. My forbears at any rate, prospered from generation to generation, became great landowners and possessed large colonies of slaves. We were, in fact, before the Emancipation, the wealthiest settlers on the Caribbean, and even that event did not ruin us, as happened in many cases. You see before you the last of the West Indian

Slannings. Time and chance have reduced us to one, since my twin brother, Henry, was murdered recently; and though nothing can bring him back from the grave, I shall not go to my own in peace if the mystery of his death is left unexplained."

He broke off here and asked me questions concerning Duveen, while I explained that, though my chief could not come personally to explore the problem, he had sent me, that I might gather every possible particular at first-hand and report to him. I brought letters from headquarters for Mr. Slanning, and presently we went together to the Ice House and sat for half-an-hour in that famous restaurant while he perused them.

During this time I had leisure to regard the life of the town beneath the shady balcony on which we sat.

There extended a street of white houses under wooden tiles grown silver-gray beneath the sun. Shop-fronts opened beneath, while above was a canopy of blue, and the glaring white roadway cast up a shimmer of fiery air, full of dust under the ceaseless footfall of the people. Noisy crowds traveled leisurely up and down. Little trams passed incessantly to Bellfield, Fontabelle and other places beyond the town; teams of squealing mules brought in barrels of sugar and molasses from outlying estates; donkeys bore along bright bundles of green cane-tops; public conveyances crawled by the sidewalks, and private buggies hurried up and down. Slanning's big motor car—a curiosity at that time—stood beneath me and attracted general interest. Women filled the footways, the better sort wearing black veils to protect their eyes from the glare. With naked feet, white dresses and gay turbans, the negresses wandered chattering along, their wares upon their heads in baskets. They sold coco-nuts, sugar-cane, oranges, limes, fig-bananas, sapodillas, mangoes, yams, fish, cakes and sweetmeats, nuts, pine-apples, pickles, and a dozen other comestibles.

The colored men, too, labored in easy fashion, dragging hand-carts, driving cattle, jabbering ceaselessly, and shining like polished metal. In cool corners and where balconies threw down patches of velvet-black shadow sat the loafers and non-workers, munching cane and fruit, smoking, bargaining with the women who sold drink, sucking ice, laughing, chaffing, telling stories, and playing the fool.

There were ancient beggars and swarms of children, like chocolate dolls with woolly heads and great black eyes. From time to time the glare of the street was slaked with a hose; but the road-

way was dry again in five minutes after this operation. Black policemen, dressed in white, kept order, and now and then a ragged, expostulating scamp was led away to justice. More women passed driving lean, wiry animals that looked like greyhounds, but were pigs; while others carried Muscovy ducks under their arms, or conveyed cackling cocks and hens in wicker baskets. Of well-to-do folk there were black clergymen, black lawyers, black soldiers, black merchants and their womenfolk, flaunting gaudy hats and parasols, showy trinkets and clothes cut in bygone fashions. The store-keepers bustled about in chimney-pot hats and white ducks. Great dragon-flies flashed overhead, and the heavy air was scented with warm odors of dust and fruit.

Subconsciously I soaked in the scene; then Mr. Slanning interrupted my observations.

"Now I understand," he said, "and heartily I hope you are not here in vain. We'll go to the club and lunch. Then I'll tell you the story, as far as I know it; and then we'll drive home. You'll put up with me, I trust?"

This, however, I declined to do, and explained that it was my purpose to be entirely free during the coming weeks.

"To stop with you might handicap me in many ways," I said, and he raised no question.

The great motor car soon carried us to the club. But an incident broke the brief journey.

There passed us a little "victoria" in which sat two ladies, and the car was stopped, while Amos Slanning dismounted and spoke with them. One, a handsome, middle-aged woman, he addressed, while the other listened. She was a very pretty young creature—an exotic here, as it seemed to me, for she was pale and her blue eyes lacked luster. One had pictured her at home with roses in her cheeks; here she challenged one's sympathy as a hardy flower seen in a hot-house.

"Tell me you are better," said Slanning to the elder, and she shook hands warmly and assured him that she was.

"Poor May is not, however. I'm going to take her to America for the summer," she said.

"You are wise," he answered, gently regarding the girl. "Let her have distractions, the dear child—she needs them."

Then his voice dropped, and I doubted not that he was mentioning me.

A moment later he introduced me. The girl bowed, but did

not speak; her mother shook hands and hoped that I should be successful.

"All who loved my dear friend's brother share his sorrow," she said quietly. "And there is nobody on earth who knew him that did not love him. But you are faced with great difficulties, for this shocking deed was without motive so far as any human being can see."

She spoke clearly and with deep earnestness, and added that she hoped I would come to see her, if I found it desirable to do so.

They drove on, and Slanning trusted that I had marked them carefully.

"Nothing," he said, "connects them with my brother's death, and yet, to my mind, there may exist some link. They are dear friends, and Lady Warrender's late husband, General Sir George Warrender, was also a close friend to my brother and myself. But, all unconsciously and innocently, the ladies may, none the less, be involved, in some way hidden both from themselves and us. That will be for you to consider when you know all that I can tell you."

"The girl looks very ill," I said.

"She is—with reason. But the illness is of the mind, not the body. She has had a sad shock."

We reached a public square, wherein the object of chief interest was a green-bronze statue of Lord Nelson; and then arriving at Slanning's club, alighted and presently enjoyed a lunch of many delicacies.

After the meal, he led me into a small, private smoking-room, where we should be alone. He offered a cigar, which I declined, since the business of my visit was now to begin. Nor did he smoke himself, but entered at once upon his narrative.

"Stop me and ask any questions that may occur to you," he said, and then proceeded.

"My mother died when Henry and I were boys of fourteen years old. We were in England at the time and had just gone from a preparatory school to Harrow. From there we proceeded together to Cambridge. During the winter vacations we used to come out to my father here; while in the summer he usually visited Europe and took us with him to France or Italy. We were just completing our years at the university when my father, Fitzherbert Slanning, passed away somewhat suddenly—he had always been a delicate man—and Henry and I were called to the estates. My father held that absentee landlords were the ruin

of the West Indies and, long before he died, made us promise to live and work here. We kept our word.

"It is, I believe, a rooted opinion that twins resemble each other closely in every particular of appearance and character and taste; and doubtless it often happens so; but I cannot flatter myself that I am half the man my brother was. He possessed better brains, better judgment and a larger measure of self-control. We resembled each other superficially, but he revealed a more thoughtful countenance and a less impetuous disposition. I would not say that I was the optimist and Henry the pessimist; but whereas my nature leads me to be sanguine and trustful, he was more cautious and a far shrewder judge of character.

"We had a valuable overseer, faithful to my father and trained in a school to whom the Slannings were a tradition. He helped to seat us in the saddle, and since we were both workers, and well educated, we carried on with success the great sugar industry that our ancestors had founded. Now I am last of my line, and no other Slanning than myself has any direct interest in the 'Pelican' Estates. They are mine, together with the revenues they furnish and responsibilities they embrace.

"Life passed for Henry and myself uneventfully and prosperously. We were everything on earth to each other, and had not, as I believed, an idea unshared, or an ambition not held in common. I stuck to the business entirely; Henry developed wider activities, joined the administration and did useful public work. He was a man of extraordinary generosity; he loved to advance the welfare of the island and the humblest upon it. If it can be said of any man that he had not an enemy, that can be said of my brother. He was the soul of justice and displayed an enthusiasm for humanity that won the respect of the rich and the worship of the poor. Yet this man has been deliberately destroyed by a fellow-man under circumstances of the profoundest mystery; and when he perished another died also—one who would have laid down his life for Henry, or myself, a thousand times. This was John Diggle, a full-blooded negro, whose forbears have worked for generations at the 'Pelican.' He was a watchman, and his business required that he should guard the plantations at night. The looser sort of niggers will always pilfer, and none is immune from that annoyance. At the time of cane-cutting, therefore, we look after our boundaries; and if the blackguards who come thieving know that they may get a

bullet about their ears they think twice before committing depredations.

"It was an old custom that niggers found by our estate police in the cane by night were challenged, and if they did not respond, fired upon. It is a very ancient enactment—of course not followed nowadays.

"The manner of Henry's death I will now describe. After a night of full moon, he did not join me at breakfast according to his habit, and, sending a servant to seek him, I found he was neither in his bedroom nor study.

"Puzzled, I looked round myself, but could see nothing of him. Then came the evil news from the cane-fields, and I mounted my horse and rode out to a spot, a mile from home, lying in a clearing on the outskirts of the plantations not very far from the Crane Hotel on the south coast of the island. My brother was lying dead, shot through the breast, and, actually upon him, John Diggle also lay—a corpse. His gun, with both barrels discharged, was found nearly twenty yards from the bodies; and that it was Diggle's gun which had destroyed both my dear brother and himself there could be no question, for the cartridges were of a peculiar bore and the heavy swan shot unlike anything else of this sort in Barbados.

"Another weapon was also discovered—a revolver, brand new, and with all its chambers empty. It had evidently never been fired, and I had never seen it or heard of it; but subsequent investigation showed that my brother had bought it in England with a box of a hundred cartridges which was never even opened. The revolver is one of Forest's make, and why Henry bought it—seeing his curious hatred and dread of fire-arms—is a part of this mystery.

"Medical examination proved that neither man had been shot at close range—a fact that disposed of an obvious theory. For the local police—colored people—suspected that poor Diggle had murdered Henry and then shot himself; but this is impossible. First, he worshiped Henry as something more than a man, and would have suffered any imaginable torture rather than hurt a hair of his head; and, secondly, he himself was shot from some distance off. From the nature of the wounds it was calculated that the gun must have been fired at a range of twenty yards—the distance it was found lying from the bodies.

"Ten yards from the spot where my brother fell, hidden in the plantation, we came upon a pile of cut cane and one of the com-

mon axes used for cutting it. This would not have been there under normal circumstances and pointed to the fact of a thief. He had apparently been busy when disturbed. But of him no trace is forthcoming, though a handsome reward and free pardon have been offered to the rascal if he will step forward and tell us anything he knows.

"Why my brother was out that night is, of course, part of this problem; for there existed no shadow of reason that he should have been. He never did such a thing, to my knowledge, before, and though he often took solitary rides and walks, being of a meditative spirit, it was not, of course, his rule to rise after retiring. Yet, on the night of his death, he must have awakened from sleep, drawn on his boots, flung a black alpaca coat over his pyjamas, and sauntered out a mile or more into the plantations, to the beat where he knew that Diggle would be doing his work and keeping his rounds.

"I now come to the third man who appears to have lost his life on this fatal night. Personally I do not associate him in any way with the story I have told you. I see no shadow of connection between the two crimes, and I am tolerably confident —indeed we all are—that the poor wretch known as Solly Lawson got his throat cut by an enemy.

"He was a half-caste employed at the 'Pelican,' who lived with an old black mother in a cabin near the cliffs. He was a worthless, hot-tempered beggar, with a dog-like affection for my brother and myself; but he quarreled with his fellows and always gave himself great airs on the strength of his white blood. Solly had a way with the ladies also, and made a good deal of trouble in his own circle of society. He has fought various battles and figured in more than one paternity case; but though the unfortunate fellow thus earned some reprobation, we, weakly enough, forgave him a great many of his faults, for he was a mirth-provoking spirit with ready wit; and as much for his old mother and his dead father's sake as his own, we kept him on and forgave him his stupid sins. He had been locked up twice, and he knew that one more serious offense would be the last, so far as the 'Pelican' was concerned; but it seemed of late that he had reformed and was becoming a responsible member of the community. So, at least, old Mrs. Lawson declared.

"Well, on the dark day of this double murder, came news of Solly Lawson's end. The debonair creature, so witty and full of life—such a secret joy to us and such a source of endless

exasperation to his fellows—was found dead with his throat cut from ear to ear.

"An accident revealed the murder, for the body lay on a shelf under the cliffs, midway between the summit and the deep sea that rolled beneath. It was evident that those responsible for his destruction had flung him over, after murdering him, and that instead of falling into the water to the sharks two hundred feet below, as they intended, the unseen ledge had received him. From this, when found, he was subsequently lowered into a boat and brought ashore. The fall had broken several bones, but the fatal wound was in his throat.

"In his case, also, no motive whatever for his murder has appeared; and though I doubt not it was over some woman that he finally came to grief, nothing throws light on the subject, and nobody in Barbados can be fairly suspected of the business.

"Thus we have three capital crimes, all of which, on the face of it, are motiveless; and while in the case of Solly, as I say, we may feel very sure that he awakened some secret malignity and brought his punishment upon himself—while there probably are those among us who know the secret of his death—yet, so far as my brother and John Diggle are concerned, no shadow of reason for their destruction can be found on the island, or in the world.

"Of my brother I have spoken; while Diggle, in his humble capacity, similarly enjoyed universal respect and regard. We had not a more popular servant on the plantation, or in the factories. He leaves a wife and three youngsters, and my brother was godfather to the eldest.

"That is the dreadful outline you will have to fill in, young man; and now please ask me what questions may occur to you, unless you would rather leave them for a later occasion."

"I shall have many questions to ask, Mr. Slanning," I answered; "but at this point perhaps you will tell me a little about Lady Warrender and her daughter?"

"Gladly. The incident which connects them with my brother's name lies outside those I have narrated; nor can I link it with Henry's death. But you will approach this matter with an open mind, and in any case must hear it and regard it as a strict confidence. This was one of those few experiences that my dear brother kept from me entirely; nor should I have ever known but for the ladies themselves.

"A year ago now Henry told me I ought to marry, and I retorted that it was quite as much his business as mine. He

admitted it, and we chaffed one another; but I regarded him as an incurable bachelor and believed myself to be one. In truth, however, Henry desired to marry, and, with what looks now like extraordinary secrecy, cultivated little May Warrender. Her mother did not know it until afterwards; but when Henry died, the girl revealed to her mother that he had much desired to marry her and proposed twice."

"You have no reason to doubt her?"

"None, for she is not the sort to invent such a story. Perhaps, if I had heard such a thing from anybody but these people, I might have disbelieved; but it is impossible to question them. Henry evidently loved her and strove hard to win her; but he looked old for his age, and doubtless seemed older than he was to a girl not twenty. Whether he was deeply disappointed or not can never be known. He was such a philosopher that I do not suppose he allowed the matter to trouble him more than was inevitable. May liked him immensely, and after he died she was quite ill for a time; but when she told her mother, she also declared that marriage with him would have been impossible. Probably, as I say, his reverse did not cast Henry down unduly, for he was a very quick-minded and intelligent man and a great student of human nature. Moreover, had it made any very poignant impression upon him, I cannot think it would have been hidden from me, even had he tried to hide it. We knew each other too well, and he certainly did not depart at that time from his customary steadfast frame of mind—not before me, at any rate. He was level-headed and well-balanced as usual."

So Amos Slanning's statement ended, and what chiefly struck me were the innumerable permutations and combinations that might be drawn from it. That the speaker had told me the truth, as he saw it, I could not doubt. He was a simple-minded, ingenuous man, and evidently very deeply moved by his loss. For the rest, it became a question how to pursue my inquiries to the best advantage.

The local police had no theory and no clue; while those chiefly interested in the dead were in the same predicament. Nobody could fit the facts together and make a rational story out of them; indeed the very material seemed doubtful, for the body of opinion separated the death of the young half-caste, Solly Lawson, from that of the others, and held it only a coincidence that he had lost his life at the same time.

After his recital Mr. Slanning took me for a long ride about

the island, and we stopped at the scenes of the incidents in his story. Mile after mile of sugar-cane extended upon every side of us. Great jungles of it fringed the road with drooping polished stems—tawny tangles of dried leaves below and bright green crowns above. Narrow irrigation ditches made a network of the land, and about the prevalent cane ascended sometimes clumps of banana, their broad leaves tattered in the wind. Here and there rose bread-fruit trees and groves of handsome mahogany, or tamarind, to offer welcome shade.

Beside a little house surrounded by a hedge of prickly pear, a calabash-tree grew, and its green, polished fruit hung from jagged, almost leafless boughs.

"That's where poor Diggle's widow lives," said Slanning, "and we are within a mile of the scene of the tragedy. Now you can see the general outline of the 'Pelican' Estates, sweeping in an arc to north and south and ranging almost to the coral cliffs near the Crane Hotel. If you won't come to me, you might take quarters there, to be on the scene of your work."

But knowing not where that work would be, I determined for the present to remain in Bridgetown, and after standing in a clearing on the scene of his brother's death and visiting the stately home of the last of the Barbados Slannings, I returned to town and presently took a couple of rooms in a secluded square not far from the club.

II

My object was to work unknown, as much as possible, and in this ambition Amos Slanning assisted me. My business was not specified, though I soon found that most people were aware of it. I wanted, of course, to learn much that the dead man's brother could not tell me, and since the matter still remained a nine days' wonder, all men were glad enough to talk about it, and the conversation in the club smoking-room often drifted round to it.

I had been elected a temporary member of this institution and spent a few days almost entirely within its walls. I found Amos Slanning immensely popular; indeed even more so than Henry had been; for while men spoke of the dead with respect, and deplored his sudden end, it seemed that he had not awakened enthusiasm. Indeed the rest of mankind saw him with different

eyes from his twin. A Creole lawyer at the club knew both well, and gave me a friendly but independent description of them.

"Henry Slanning was a man of affairs," he said. "He had ambition and little liked to be contradicted. But few ever contradicted him, for he was a very sane man, a sound democrat, and knew the trend of contemporary thought. You can form no complete opinion of him through his brother. He had none of the sanguine spirit and natural cheerfulness that marks Amos. He was, in fact, of a somber cast of mind."

"Have you any theory of events?" I asked for the sake of conversation, and the other answered that he had none.

"Had Henry been faced with any great and crushing disappointment," he said, "or had he found himself up against some stroke of fate beyond the power of his money, or brains, to withstand, I can imagine he might have destroyed himself. His brother, of course, says that under no conceivable circumstances would he have done such a thing; others, however, agree with me so far. But this is no suicide obviously. He was deliberately shot from some distance—twenty yards at least, the doctors say."

So he spoke, and others also furnished some items of information, or some experiences throwing light on character. All helped to complete the picture of Henry Slanning; but none, from his brother to the billiard-marker at the club, could give a comprehensive portrait; and I perceived the picture might never be completed, unless Duveen himself proved equal to that task.

Almost my first visit was to Lady Warrender, and her description of the murdered man differed slightly from the rest. She said he was of a religious temperament, but unorthodox and not devoted to any particular form of faith.

"He would have ended his days a Catholic, if he had lived," she declared, and proceeded: "He had an intellectual taste and liked metaphysical and psychological problems. My late husband shared his inquiries, and they enjoyed interminable arguments on the subject of free will and determination, faith and reason, and so on. There was a side of Henry which you may say was completely hidden from his brother. Indeed Henry knew that he possessed a far subtler intellect and a much larger power of imagination. He loved Amos dearly; but more as a father loves a son than as a brother loves a brother. He never troubled Amos with his own deep meditations, or questioned his brother's faith. He was always very careful never to speak of

things before Amos that would have put his brother in a false position, or make him appear mentally inferior in general conversation. He was most tender and sensitive to all. But he hated vain and self-sufficient people, and resented criticism of the West Indies in general and Barbados in particular."

"You did not know that he desired to marry Miss Warrender?"

"I had no idea of it. Sometimes I chaffed him and his brother about finding wives and not letting the famous Barbados Slannings die out with them; but Henry always said that Amos was the marrying man. May would, of course, have kept his proposal a secret, as he begged her to do, had it not been for his death. Then she felt it was only right to confide in me, and I told his brother. One never knows what may bear upon a question."

"You noticed no change in him latterly?"

"None. It was about six weeks after his second rejection that he died."

"Should you have objected to such a marriage?"

"I should not have interfered. He was a distinguished and honorable man—a gentleman in the highest sense of the term. My daughter liked him, and it hurt her much to make him sad; but she did not love him. Though only fifteen years older than May, he seemed far more to her: he was old for his age—a staid, quiet man, averse from society, fond of reading, and with no pleasures in which the average girl could share. He would have made a splendid husband, but not for May."

Gradually I built up the vision of Henry Slanning, yet I cannot say that I ever saw the man very clearly. He came and went, sometimes grew clear, then receded again. Some, I found, held him a cynic, with the warm heart a cynic often conceals; others, of a religious frame of mind, doubted him as a free thinker. None denied that much good could be credited to him; but only in one quarter, and that very unexpected, did I find a suggestion that he had ever committed an act open to question.

I visited the widow of John Diggle, who proved a talker. But she was intelligent, her memory seemed trustworthy and her honesty obvious. She was gathering washing from the thorny hedge outside her little home, and chattered mournfully of the dead night-watchman and his virtues.

"Him not hab an enemy, sar—de kindest man and de best husband. Him work for Marse Henry an' Marse Amos for

years an' years, an' nebber a hard word from dem all de time. Dey fink de world ob him; an' my po' John, he fink de world ob dem."

"Let me come into your house and sit down, Mrs. Diggle, out of the sun. I'm sure everybody has been very sorry for you. Mr. Diggle was greatly respected."

"A most respectable man, sar, an' only wicked rogues dat tief de cane ebber quarrel wid him."

"Had he any quarrel with Solly Lawson, the poor nigger who had his throat cut?"

"Nebber. He knew Solly was a wild nigger; but John 'markable gentle wid young men, and he said Solly mend some day. He a most Christian person, my John."

"Tell me about him. I am very interested to hear about him."

She rambled on for a while, and gradually I brought her to her last memories of the man.

"Did he ever do anything that Mr. Henry didn't approve?"

"No, sar—nebber."

"Did Mr. Henry ever do anything your husband didn't approve?"

"No, sar; Marse Henry a good man. But—but——"

"They always agreed?"

"Now you say dat, I 'member a queer fing, sir. One day—one, two, free day before him shot, my John came in sad to him breakfus', an' I say, 'What de matter, John?' An' him say, 'Nuffin'.' But I say, 'Dar somefin', 'cause yo' head wrinkle up an' you puff fro' your nose.' An' him say, 'You dam silly old woman, Jane.' Den 'fore he got out in de pigeon peas to work, he say, 'Blast dem wicked folk dat steal de cane—dey make trouble, an' it fall on me.'"

"Was much cane being stolen?"

"No, sar. Dar always a little gwine by night; an' John, he cotch a man sometimes; but it nuffin' much, an' I nebber heard him worry 'bout it. So I say, 'Yo' no' worry, John, 'bout a silly fing like dat,' an' he say, 'I got to worry, 'cause Marse Henry, him worry. An' Marse Henry, him tell me I no' sharp enough an' no' do my duty to de tiefs an' forget how to treat de rogues.' I terrible surprised to hear my husband say dat, an' John, he run on, an' he say he do what he told in de future, whatebber happen, an' no' question orders; an' I say, 'You always do what you told, John.'"

"Did he explain any more about it?"

"No. Him go 'way growling; but him soon get happy again. He said no mo' 'bout it, an' I fink no mo' 'bout it till John gone killed an' Marse Henry gone killed; an' den I wish I knew more 'bout it; but too late den. Po' John—him shot in de side, an' him heart blown to pieces."

"I suppose Mr. Slanning couldn't have shot your husband?"

"Me Gard! Marse Henry shoot John? Yo' might as well fink John shoot Marse Henry. Marse Henry a gemman dat hated killing anyfing. Him nebber fired a gun in him life. Him nebber squashed a scorpion. He loved John, for him told me so, when John ill once. An' John—him have died a hundred times for Marse Henry, or Marse Amos. He berry faithful man an' live for his masters."

"Have you any idea in your own mind, Mrs. Diggle, what happened? If John has sometimes arrested men for stealing sugar-cane, he may have had enemies."

"No, de man or two dat went to prison no fink bad ob John. It all in de day's work for bad man to be cotch some time. And John—him shot wid his own gun—'member dat. John carry his gun himself. He nebber put it out of him hand."

"It would have been impossible, you think, for anybody to get his gun away from John?"

"Only Marse Henry do dat. If Marse Henry come by night an' say, 'Lend me yo' gun, John,' den John lend him. But Marse Henry no want gun. Him hate guns."

"Did your husband ever say he had met Mister Slanning on his rounds by night?"

"Nebber, sar. He sure tell me if such a funny fing as dat happen, 'cause Marse Henry and Marse Amos, dey never go near de plantations by night."

"Have any of your friends any idea what may have happened?"

"Only silly folk. Dey fink de debble tell Marse Henry to go out in de night an' put it in John's head to shoot him; an' den de debble shoot John; but what Gard A'mighty doin' all de time? Marse Henry an' John berry good men, an' dey in Hebben now wid golden crowns on der heads an' golden wings an' golden harps, sar; but dat no better for de wicked murderer dat dey happy now. He go to Hell all de same whar him belong."

"You don't think Solly Lawson had anything to do with it?"

"I doan know nuffin' 'bout dat. He killed dead too, so nobody nebber know if him dar or not."

"He was a sort of chap who might steal cane?"

"Him tief plenty cane, I daresay, massa; but him nebber do nuffin' against Marse Henry—Marse Henry stand up for him plenty times. De niggers tief cane, because dey terrible ignorant fellows an' no fink how wicked dey are; but dey no fall out wid udder gemmen about it. Dat po' Solly—if him see anybody treating John bad, or treating Marse Henry bad, he run to help dem, I'se sure."

She whined on—a shrewd, sensible creature enough, and one sorrowed for her grief, for she often stopped talking to weep. It was personal mourning at her loss and no fear for the future that troubled her, for Amos Slanning had provided for her and her children.

And elsewhere, a few days later, my inquiries took me to see another sad, black woman, the mother of the murdered Solly Lawson.

She dwelt by some coral steps cut in the cliff face not far from the seaward boundaries, and her cabin was approached over a parched headland where grew opuntia and huge aloes on the scorched earth. Great, winged grasshoppers leapt and flew lazily, their gauzes flashing; lizards basked in the blaze of naked sunshine, and a deep silence reigned, only broken by the husky stridulation of the insects. One black goat stalked here, and, in a dried water-course, there hopped a solitary frog. Upon the fleshy leaves of the aloes holiday folk had cut their initials, and lovers, too, had set their names enwoven.

Mrs. Mary Lawson's cabin stood near the place of her son's death. She was a little, withered negress who had married an Englishman—an old sailor, who found work at the "Pelican" when he left the coasting trade in the Antilles. Mary could add little to my knowledge; but she confirmed what others had said of Solly.

"Him no berry bad, sar—only fond ob de gals an' berry good-looking—my dear boy was. He lost him head and did silly fings an' fell out wid de neighbors; but him no wicked deep down, an' him always terrible sorry after. Him so much full ob life dat it run away wid him—a berry 'scitable boy, sar, an' dash at fings an' often get in a mess, but ebb'rybody forgib him after him sorry. An' Marse Henry—he nebber

rough wid Solly, 'cause Solly so quick wid him tongue, he always get round Marse Henry, an' Marse Amos too, an' make dem laugh."

"He was fond of them?"

"He lub dem—nuffing too good for dem—he tell me dat a fousand times. All de world lub dem—dar nobody on de earf dat would hurt dem. An' if Solly see anybody do harm to Marse Henry or Marse Diggle—he—so fierce him be—dat he fight dem an' no care if he kill dem."

"He was friendly with John Diggle, too?"

"Yes, sar—he friendly to Marse Diggle. Marse Diggle a berry nice gemman, an' kind to my son when odder folks cross wid him."

"But suppose Marse Diggle had seen your son stealing sugar-cane?"

"Den Marse Diggle would hab got Solly lock up. God forgib my Solly, dat happened one or two times; but John forgib Solly after him punished, an' Solly no angry wid Marse Diggle after. When a fing done, it done, sar."

"You wouldn't say that Solly might not have been stealing cane that night?"

"No, sar, I wouldn't say dat. He might; but I no fink him dar. I no fink him far from him home. I fink some bad men quarrel wid Solly ober a gal, an' lie hid for him, an' pounce on my po' boy while him come home, an' kill him."

"More men then one?"

"Yes, because Solly berry quick an' strong. Dar no nigger in dese parts strong enough to kill my Solly single-handed wid a knife, an' den fro him over de cliff. It take six, sebben men to do dat."

She dwelt on her son's great strength with mournful satisfaction.

"You cannot give a name to anybody who might have had a grudge against him?"

"No, sar—nobody. Him been berry good boy for long time now. An' I ask all de niggers if dey know anybody what hab a down on Solly, an' nobody know. But dar must be somebody done it. I fink sailor men, who sail away de next day, might hab done it."

"You know of no girl who cared for your son, or quarreled with him?"

"Plenty gals, sar; but he only friends wid one gal in George-

town now, an' she hab no friends but Solly, an' she terrible fond ob him."

"He treated her well?"

"Berry kind an' good to her. She tell yo' de same if yo' ask her."

Further inquiries respecting the character and history of John Diggle and Solly Lawson confirmed these reports of wife and mother. Independent witnesses agreed with them and with Amos Slanning, who had already told me the same story. It was indeed a curious coincidence that the three dead men all lacked any sinister or dangerously unsocial qualities. Of the young half-caste, though it was clear he had been lawless and more or less disreputable, it seemed unlikely that he could have wakened sufficient enmity to lose his life for his sins. The negroes threaten great things; but I learned that they seldom rose to capital crime, and a cold-blooded premeditated taking off, such as had fallen to the lot of the unfortunate Solly, seemed difficult to explain, or parallel from experience. That it had actually happened was clear enough; but that it could have happened without leaving a sign or clue behind, without wakening a suspicion in any quarter, or incriminating, however remotely, a single soul, greatly puzzled the local police.

These gentlemen I found intelligent enough, and it was clear they had pursued the original enquiries in an effective and thoroughly professional manner after conventional and sound methods. No difficulties were thrown in their way, and there was not a soul in Barbados, apparently, who would not willingly have assisted their enquiries had it been in his power. Not the most shadowy explanation of the crime rewarded their energetic investigation, nor could the hundred and one amateur detectives who strove to solve the mystery throw any light upon it.

Most people I found separated the death of Slanning and Diggle from that of Solly Lawson. Indeed the only thing that might link them was the pile of cut cane near the spot where Henry Slanning and his watchman had fallen. But while this appeared to be the work of a nightly robber who had been surprised, none could say that Solly was the man. And had he been, it was exceedingly certain that he would have made no attempt on the life either of his master or the night-watchman. Indeed the rolls of the "Pelican" Estate, or any other estate, held no character, among many workers, who could be pointed to as capable of such a crime. To be caught stealing cane was a

very venial offense in Ethiopian eyes. The possibility of a white man stealing cane appeared remote; yet some shared Mrs. Lawson's impression that a sailor, or sailors, might be implicated. No justification for any such opinion appeared, however.

To explain why Henry Slanning had gone out in the night challenged me as the pregnant point; and, given the reason for that most unusual step, everything else might have followed from it; but no reason offered; at every turn in this exasperating inquiry I was headed off, by a blank wall as it seemed, for the purpose and motive, though they must have existed for every secret incident in this web, proved absolutely beyond my power to discover. Henry Slanning had clearly gone where he knew John Diggle was to be found on his rounds; but whether he had actually sought Diggle, or another, could never be known, unless a living man, or woman, furnished the information. None, however, came forward; there was an extraordinary lack of all evidence; for in such cases, nine times out of ten, chance offers a foothold for a first step, through some incident, or observation, that may open the way to inquiry, or suggest a train of research. But no such thing happened for me. None bore any testimony of any sort whatever, and none actually came within the radius of the enquiry. Here apparently one stood confronted with three barefaced and deliberate murders, committed in one night on a small island, yet not a shadow of any motive explained them, and not a living being could fairly be pointed at as suspect in the slightest degree.

I made very copious notes and, of course, pursued enquiry through many minor channels, which all ended in failure and contributed no light. I stood in the disagreeable position of being unable to make a case, and after six weeks of very hard and conscientious work, was forced to own it to myself. A loss of self-esteem resulted. I began all over again, only to complete another circle of failure. Nor could it be called comparative unsuccess. The futility of my investigation was almost absurdly complete. I arrived at no theory of any sort or kind, and though once I glimpsed the truth darkly, as afterwards appeared, I wandered from the right road the moment it began to appear wrong.

My last week at Barbados, the last of six spent upon the subject, was devoted largely to Amos Slanning. He had been extraordinarily kind to me personally and insisted upon my

spending a few days at the "Pelican" Estate, as his guest, before I left the West Indies. He was frankly disappointed at my failure, but not more than I myself confessed to being. It is true that, though trained to this work by instinct and native bent, with already some fair share of success in various obscure cases, I failed utterly here.

I could only admit it and hope my chief might prove more fortunate. We talked much of Henry Slanning; indeed I kept the conversation to him as far as one decently might, and not only with his twin brother; for now I saw the truth of what men had told me—that Amos entertained an opinion of his brother that differed from the truth. He did not undervalue his rectitude, or the regard and respect universally extended to the dead man; but he had never fathomed a character very different from his own, and probably never felt, even if he had seen, the intellectual and inquisitive side of Henry Slanning's mind. For example, when I returned to the possibility of suicide, a thought that haunted me in connection with the case, though the facts were there to prove murder, Amos Slanning assured me that nothing was more unlikely, and even when the revolver was proved to have been bought in England by his brother, he stoutly protested that it could not have been purchased with any thought of such a purpose. Others, however, saw no improbability in the idea of Henry Slanning's suicide under certain circumstances; but, since an obvious murder and not suicide confronted us, they saw no object in raising the question.

I begged a photograph of the dead man to take home with the rest of my elaborate *dossier*. The picture he lent me resembled Amos himself closely in feature, but the expression was different—subtler and more melancholy. Indeed it was a face where unrest had made a home, and one had judged that the man might have been defeated of his life's ambitions. Yet no cynicism clouded his features, and the mouth was as kindly as his brother's, if firmer. The photograph had been taken before Slanning's love affair; but what proved more interesting to me came into my hands by accident two days before I left the island on my homeward way. Amos, searching among his brother's things, had found a diary, which contained nothing that threw illumination upon the past and evidently abstained of set purpose from any mention of Henry's romance; but, in addition to this, he discovered a pile of manuscript—the musings

of an intellectual man on a variety of subjects, all of direct human interest. Study of Henry Slanning's personal library had already convinced me of his activity in the domain of thought; while Lady Warrender had confirmed the fact. His books were for the most part philosophical, and I found a translation of Gomperz that had clearly occupied much of his time, and translations of other German writers, including the English version in twenty volumes of Nietzsche. He had Gilbert Murray's Greek tragedians also, with Plato and Aristotle, deeply read. His interest evidently ran on the great pagans. As to his own writings, they reminded one of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. They abounded in curious quotations and tended to the morbid; but they were full of illumination and revealed the character of the man through his interests. He had compiled on love, passion, ambition, patience, duty, suicide, justice, free thought, and free will as opposed to destiny. He was clearly a rationalist at this stage of his life, and acknowledged no supernatural inhibition to conduct; but his sense of duty was exquisitely keen; he debated questions of justice with a mind as impartial as distinguished, and one felt in the presence of a man who was almost weighed down by his obligations to his fellow-creatures. He wrote of mastery and domination, of craft and the unhappy need for falsehood in the affairs of life, of heredity and environment as rival, or twin, forces in development of character.

I begged these voluminous documents, since, in my opinion, they must prove of great value to Duveen when he came to investigate Henry Slanning's fate; and his brother was content that I should take them with me.

"I shall publish the whole thing presently," he assured me. "It will be a valuable memorial of Henry and help to show the world that he was a remarkable man, and a far greater thinker than people supposed."

And so I left the West Indies (picking up the steamship "Don" on her return voyage from Jamaica), and departed, grateful for much kindness and consideration, and the richer for a good friend or two—men who are still my friends. But I was disappointed and chagrined to the very roots of my being at this blank failure to advance, by a single fruitful speculation, the problems I had gone so many miles, and worked so exceedingly hard, to resolve.

My utter failure had one good result, for it awoke the interest

of Michael Duveen, and he did not conceal his astonishment at a fiasco so complete.

"A dozen theories, of course, I had," I explained; "but each in turn came up against a blank negation. I could find no sort of explanation that fitted all the facts—worse, I could find no explanation that fitted any of them. So far as I could discover, as a result of sleepless search, these three men had not between them a real enemy in the world; nor was it possible to meet anybody living, or hear of anybody living, who gained a thing by the death of any of them. You'll say, of course, that Amos Slanning gains; but in reality he does not, for he and Henry had practically everything in common and were very deeply attached to each other. If one thing is certain, where all is so uncertain, I should say it was the absolute innocence of Amos Slanning. The weirdest thing is, that against the evidence of my own senses and the fact of murder duly proved—murder, of course, by a person or persons unknown—I still find my mind coming back and back to the conviction that it simply cannot be. There was nobody on earth to murder Slanning; but there was a reason in his own mind for him to commit suicide. And yet he didn't."

Duveen patted me on the shoulder.

"We shall see whether you are to be forgiven," he said. "You have at least roused my curiosity, and I may better judge, when I set to work on your notes, if you have failed as hopelessly as you imagine. Meantime there is plenty to do. Come and dine with me a week hence, if nothing happens to prevent you; then you shall hear your sentence, or your acquittal, as the case may be. The change has done you good. Save for your remorseful expression, I never saw you looking so well."

Thus he dismissed me, and I felt glad to think of other things until the evening came on which I was to dine with him. He put me off for a further week, however, but saw me at his office and asked a few questions concerning the West Indian problem. These I answered, and he made no comment on my replies.

Then I dined with him, and after the meal he read me the following report.

"I have solved the problem," he said.

"Solved it?" I gasped.

"To my own satisfaction; and I shall be disappointed if not to yours also. You are not to blame. You did everything that I should, or could, have done myself. You lacked the neces-

sary synthetic inspiration to put the pieces of the puzzle together after collecting them—that is all."

"That is everything."

"You are right. Your intuition had only to be followed, but, basely, you deserted it."

"How could I follow it against an absolute fact?"

"My dear friend, no fact is absolute."

"But murder can't be suicide."

"Murder may be suicide and suicide may be murder. Don't make rash assertions, but light your cigar and listen. I'm rather pleased with this; though it is quite possible that nobody but our noble selves will appreciate it at its true value. From your description of Amos Slanning, I am quite sure that he will not. Therefore let us expect no reward."

Then he read me his solution of the mystery.

III

"Only through a close and exhaustive study of character is it possible to reach any explanation of this problem; and in the case of Mr. Henry Slanning, on whose death the destruction of the lesser men, John Diggle and Solly Lawson, will be found to depend, ample material for an estimate of his complex temperament exists. Not only from the facts recorded concerning him, but also from his own dissertations and meditations, he may be measured; and it is from my estimate of him, built on elaborate data, that I reconstruct the incidents which deprived him and the other two victims of their lives.

"Emphatically, Solly Lawson's end forms a part of the larger problem, for I find in him a very vital component of the whole. Accident involved him in the heart of the catastrophe, and without him we should have had one dead man instead of three and a tragedy of an interesting psychological nature, but no mystery whatever. For the mystery now to be explained is not the premeditated work of man, but the blind operation of chance.

"Let us then glance first at character, and take the dead in rotation. As I shall show, we are concerned alone with them. No undiscovered villains lurking in hiding; no living man, unless it be myself, yet understands the secret. These three alone are responsible for their own undoing; or it would be more

correct to say that an egregious action of Henry Slanning precipitated the death of the other victims.

"Henry Slanning we find to be of cultured and refined tastes, averse from even the incidental violence of sport. Mrs. Jane Diggle said of him that 'he could not squash a scorpion.' He was shrewd, sagacious, and a good man of business. The power of wealth he inherited and did not abuse. He worked hard with an exemplary humanity and consideration for all he employed. He was generous, thoughtful and kind-hearted; nor did he lack for ambition beyond his own prosperity and the well-being of his many employees, for we find him accepting civil offices in Barbados and devoting no small measure of his time to unpaid labor for the general weal. This is the outer man and the personality familiar to his brother, his friends and acquaintance; but there is another Henry Slanning—an 'intellectual' of inquiring spirit, a ceaseless searcher after curious knowledge, a voluminous reader and a keen thinker along certain lines. He is interested in many things; but particular subjects possess for him a peculiar fascination, and one above all others would seem persistently to intrigue his mind. It is a morbid subject hardly to be associated with a prosperous, hale and popular young man of thirty-five; but there can be no doubt of the fact, since not only was it reported to my colleague from more than one quarter in the course of his independent enquiry, but we also find it an ever-present theme of Henry Slanning's careful memoranda. He commits himself to a definite opinion upon it; he ransacks profane literature for his support and also finds justification for his conclusions in Christian history.

"To this we will return. For the moment it is necessary to show how, what possessed, in the first place, no more than an abstract and academic interest for Henry Slanning, rose to become a personal problem and a personal temptation. He had tasted what life could offer and had, apparently, reached to the summit of his own ambitions, when there came into his life a new and tremendous experience. He fell in love for the first time. His brother, who was never absent from him, assures us that he had not before declared or revealed any affection for a woman; and though we have no absolute proof of this, since in the case of his known attachment, Mr. Amos Slanning was entirely ignorant of it until after his death—though, therefore, we cannot say with conviction that Henry never loved before, it is

reasonable to assume that no master passion overwhelmed him until he found himself in love with Miss May Warrender.

"It is certain that he was deeply attached to her, though his reserved and sensitive nature concealed the fact from all but the young lady herself. He paid his devotions with such delicacy, such humility, and such refinement as might be expected from such a man; and we may assume he was sanguine, for his life had moved easily and successfully. He had much to offer, and the object of his affections, as we know, was inexperienced, and declares that for a long time she did not appreciate the significance of his friendship. Few girls who did not yet know the meaning of love would have refused him; and she had, in all innocence, welcomed his advances, so that we may assume that he felt little doubt of acceptance.

"I insist on the extent of Mr. Slanning's disappointment when he heard that his hope was vain; and I believe that so violent and complete was the shock of the news, that a man, who never appears to have loved life for itself, for the time being revolted from it and found existence a tyranny no longer to be endured. With his rare mental endowments, it is reasonable to suppose that, presently, he would have survived this painful experience and recovered from his disappointment in the manner of a normal man; but he permitted himself no time. He turned to the subject of his philosophic research, and under this hard blow of fate—a fate that had always used him kindly until the present—he found in that theme no longer a mere preoccupation for thought, but an invitation to action.

"That theme, the ever-recurring possession of his mental activity, was suicide. And the fact appears in his own handwriting a thousand times. Again and again he opens on some other subject, yet, like a phantom in the noonday, amid intelligent considerations upon love, hope, faith, honor, duty, and other subjects worthy of a high-minded and altruistic man, self-destruction creeps into the argument. He cannot evade it; there is for him a fascination in the topic that brings him back to it again and again. It vitiates his thinking; it is a black thread woven through the fabric of his thoughts. He exhausts literature in his search for every high example and significant reference to it.

"He held with the great pagans that to live in want, dishonor or suffering was folly. He echoed Cato, Pomponius Atticus, Epicurus. We find him quoting Seneca: '*Malum est in necessitate*

vivere; necessitas nulla est': that it is miserable to live in need, but there is no need so to do. He agrees with Marcus Aurelius that if the cabin smokes a wise man takes leave of it. He says with Quintilian, *'Nemo nisi sua culpa diu dolet'*: no man endures suffering save through his own fault. But he is not content to justify the practise of suicide from the pagans alone; it is not enough that the Medes and Persians, the Greeks and Romans are with him and that all nations of antiquity furnish admirable and laudable examples of what in Christian eyes is generally regarded as a sin. He seeks instances through the sacred Jewish writings, and finds in the Apocrypha an authentic instance, when Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem, slays himself (2 Maccabees), and is applauded by the historian for so doing. We find him also concerned with lights of the Christian Church—Pelagia and Sophronia, canonized for their saintly self-destruction; and of men, especially Jacques du Chastel, that bishop of Soissons who charged an army single-handed and gloriously committed *felo-de-se* for his faith. John Donne's famous apology for suicide, *Biathanatos,* he also quotes at length.

"Then, having concluded with Cicero that it is agreeable to nature in a wise man to take leave of life at its height of prosperity, he writes a learned essay on a saying from Josephus, that he who dies sooner or lives longer than he ought is equally a coward.

"With respect to Henry Slanning, then, I affirm that, after his disappointment in love, life lost its flavor and, led thereto by habit of mind and natural predisposition, he determined to destroy himself, having long convinced his reason that such an act is justified and agreeable to philosophy. We will leave the unfortunate gentleman in that resolution for a few moments and turn our attention to the other victims of the tragedy on 'Pelican' Estate.

"In the case of John Diggle, the night-watchman, no difficulty of character presents itself. He was a direct, single-minded man against whom nothing evil can be advanced—a good husband, a good parent, and a loyal and honest servant. He carried on the tradition handed to him by his grandfather and father before him, and worked with one sole purpose—the welfare of his employers. Their relation to him was closer than that of master and man. They valued him for himself, and in many ways revealed their personal regard and esteem.

"This negro's duty was to guard the sugar-cane plantations

by night, and we find, in connection with that work, an old but general understanding and unwritten law, that thieves stole at their personal peril. It was not uncommon in former days for these pilfering gentlemen to lose their lives, just as a poacher, or other nocturnal robber in England, has also paid the extreme penalty. But human feeling naturally sets against such a strenuous course of action as principles of humanity gain ground. A hundred years ago the man-trap and spring-gun were sanctioned; yet such barbaric engines are now by law swept into oblivion. So with this old pre-slave proscription; and we may take it for granted that John Diggle would not have fired upon a thief, even under greater provocation than he was ever likely to receive from one.

"In this connection, nevertheless, we find a cloud arise on the life of John Diggle some few days before his end. Too much importance cannot be attached to this incident, since upon it hangs the whole theory about to be elaborated. We must, therefore, dwell on the statement made by Mrs. Diggle in Barbados. If necessary, Mrs. Diggle can be further questioned, though in my judgment she had already said all that need be said.

"What does she say?

"That on a certain occasion her husband came in sad to breakfast. He denies his trouble at first; but upon his wife insisting that he is not himself, he curses the cane thieves, and says that he has got to worry about them, because Mr. Henry Slanning is worrying about them. Mr. Henry has told Diggle that he is falling short of his duty and forgetting how to treat the thieves.

"Immediately before the tragedy, therefore, John Diggle has been reproved for laxity in his work, and he resolves that, come what may come of it, he will obey his orders to the letter. We shall find what those orders were in a moment; and there can, I think, be little doubt that the commands issued to Diggle by Henry Slanning were of a nature that Diggle did not expect. They surprised him, and we can see how. In the first place, it was highly improbable that Slanning would bother his head about the petty pilferings of cane, or care a button concerning such a trifle; and, in the second, still more improbable that he should seek to put a stop to them by reversion to obsolete, drastic measures that he, of all men, would have been the first to censure. For so I read John Diggle's trouble, coupled with his

resolve. He is going to obey, regardless of consequences; he is going to do exactly as he is told, 'whatever happens.' He therefore apprehended that something might happen; but he was under orders and did not attempt to shirk them, though the orders had astonished and even dismayed him.

"Leaving him also, on the threshold of the disaster, I turn to Solly Lawson and find a character that can be very fairly appreciated from the information at our disposal. This young half-caste is seen as a youth of strong animal passions, uncontrolled, but not malevolent. He was of little worth, sensual, lazy and quick-tempered; but he had wit and a ready tongue, and—what alone matters—his attitude to his master was one of steadfast and deserved devotion. Nor does the fact that Solly would not scruple to steal cane detract from his affection for the gentlemen who had forgiven so many sins and still employed the poor fellow at the time of his death. Solly would steal Henry Slanning's cane to-day and die for him to-morrow. That dog-like trust and affection displayed by many negroes and half-castes is a part of young Lawson's nature. He has expressed to his mother a thousand times his regard for both his masters.

"What does Mrs. Lawson say? 'He dash at fings so.' Solly is ill-governed, impetuous and impulsive. For good or evil, he 'dashes at things.' And there is a still more remarkable statement recorded to the dead man's mother. Such is her son's affection for his employers that he would have died for them. Much follows from this assurance; but we have to admit also that Solly had no grudge against John Diggle. Even in the event of Diggle getting him locked up, Solly would not have allowed enmity against the night-watchman to inspire him on regaining his liberty. In his mind, to repeat his mother's forcible words, 'when a fing done, it done.'

"Here, then, is the third party in this trinity of the dead, and his character stands clearly before us. Had he been different; had Diggle been different; had Henry Slanning been different, my reconstruction of the events that destroyed all three would not be feasible; but it is built upon the only foundation that remains for any superstructure—the foundation of character; and, frankly to my surprise, I find it ample for our purpose. I had suspected that any theory based on character alone must have needed modification and some special pleading when it came to details; I had anticipated the need to rely upon probability, the need to exercise no little ingenuity in

rounding the narrative and gathering the tangled thread into a complete skein; I had even feared that known factors of character might presently confound me and make it impossible honestly to develop a consistent story; but, to my satisfaction, I find this is not the case. Effect, in shape of facts, follows cause, as furnished by character, directly and lucidly; motive is at last revealed, like the sun breaking from behind a cloud, and the series of events followed upon each other logically, inexorably. These things had to be, and they could not have fallen out otherwise.

"Henry Slanning is responsible for the entire concatenation. He designed a certain action and took elaborate means to ensure its operation; but, the event he planned being duly accomplished, accident willed that it should serve as a prelude to other events beyond his calculations—events fatal to the second and third actors in the drama.

"Thus we arrive at the threshold of our mystery.

"When the house sleeps, Henry Slanning rises and makes his way to the plantations, choosing that region where John Diggle will be perambulating, gun on shoulder. Slanning goes of set purpose to his death. He is willing to die, but not by his own hand. It is part of his character that, while he seeks death, he cannot inflict it upon himself. He has, however, intended to do so. He has taken first steps towards that end; and the revolver, found by his dead body, was ordered by him from Messrs. Forrest, New Bond Street, London. He wrote for it a week after his great disappointment, and he duly received it, with a box of a hundred cartridges. But he could not use it. For a moment he had dreamed of so doing, when he labored under the bitterness of his rejection. It was, however, an aberration of character that drove him to send for the weapon, and long before it reached his hand he had sufficiently returned to himself to make its use impossible.

"Why, however, did he take it to the plantation empty? To make sure of John Diggle. He went out in his pyjamas, a light alpaca jacket, and a big straw hat, similar to those the negroes wear. Thus attired, in such a place, at such a time, he must naturally be mistaken for a common marauder; and having already directed Diggle to do his duty in such an event and fire at sight upon any thief, he trusted him to do so. But the revolver was an inspiration, calculated to nerve Diggle and banish the least remaining trace of hesitation. Diggle would

challenge, and, if he received no reply and no surrender, would fire. How much more certainly, then, might he be expected to fire, and with how much sterner efficiency of aim, if the thief threatened him!

"Two of these three men died in the clearing of cane, where cutting was in progress; and the plans of the place show the pathway extending through it to the cliffs beyond. To the clearing goes Henry Slanning and begins to cut down cane with one of the little, familiar hatchets used for the purpose. He knows that in the silence of night the noise must soon reach Diggle's ear; and it does so. The watchman thereupon hastens to the spot, and it happens that Solly Lawson, homeward bound by the short cut through the cane, arrives a few moments afterwards.

"We may describe what follows with the eyes of Solly Lawson.

"He sees Diggle challenged, and marks a man jump up before him. With head down, the robber approaches, and for answer to Diggle's demand to surrender produces a revolver and points it at the watchman. The steel flashes in the moonlight, and Diggle's response is to get in his shot first if he can. He fires and the unknown falls. Solly sees Diggle drop his gun and run forward; but he sees more. Henry Slanning has fallen backward, away from the stroke that slew him; his hat is off and, in the moonlight, he lies revealed. All that the dead man had so cunningly provided for and planned, Solly sees happen just as Slanning had designed it should happen; but the advent of young Lawson is fatal to himself and Diggle.

"He has seen his dear master murdered before his eyes, and the horrible sight provokes him to instant revenge. A moment's reflection would have saved Diggle and himself, but he cannot reflect. He sees the murderer run towards the fallen man, and, fired to frenzy by the destruction of one he dearly loved, he acts on impulse, stays not a second, but seizes Diggle's gun, probably screams out some fierce words of hate, and fires the second barrel at short range into the watchman's kneeling body. Then he drops the gun, runs forward, and discovers that it is John Diggle he has slain. He then flies to sound the alarm, while Diggle lies dead upon his master and their blood flows together.

"But Solly's feet grow slower and his passion abates. His fiery brain begins to work, and presently he understands the thing that he has done. Is it an evil dream from which he will

emerge, or can it be true that his master and John Diggle lie dead in the plantation and that he himself is a murderer? He begins to appreciate his own position. What living soul would believe that John Diggle murdered Henry Slanning? Such an event would demand proofs beyond possibility. How shall Solly's worthless word convince any man?

"One might devote pages of psycho-analysis to the meditations of Solly Lawson in his present plight; one might show how, by gradual stages, he probably wore out his wits and reached a situation of despair. But it needs an artist rather than an inquiry agent adequately to paint the picture of his horror and downfall. Had he gone home and taken counsel with his mother, some light might have fallen upon him; but this he did not do. Darker and darker became the lad's thoughts, and more hopeless the promise of the future.

"Another and abler man, or a criminal, had doubtless kept his mouth shut and gone his way, preserving his action a secret and defying his fellow-creatures ever to associate him with it; but this man was stupid, impulsive, and no criminal. I conceive that his intelligence was not equal to the strain put upon it, and that, by what train of terror we can only guess, he reached at last a conviction that he would be found guilty, sooner or later, of a double crime. His record would be against him, and there was none to speak a word for him. He had left Bridgetown on the previous night and walked home through the small hours; and all he could say was that he had seen John Diggle shoot Henry Slanning and taken vengeance into his own hands. To utter such nonsense would be to stand self-condemned.

"To me the result of these reflections on Solly Lawson can be predicted with certainty. He feels, at the morning hour of lowest vitality, that it is better to die than live for what must now lie before him. By this time he has drifted back to the cliffs, for he has been walking subconsciously homeward. The sea lies beneath him, and a few moments of suffering will end all. Better to perish thus than on the gallows, with the execration of all humanity in his ears.

"'Again impulse decides him. He sees not a ray of hope, but hungers to end his mental torture as swiftly as may be. Feeble now and worn out in body and mind, he dashes at his doom, designing to vanish off the earth forever and leave no link by which he can be connected with the dead men in the plantation. He will leap down into the sea and so disappear,

where none can find him. But a common instinct in suicide, to pile one death upon another, manifests itself in Solly Lawson at this supreme moment. Men often destroy themselves so; and there is undoubtedly some subtle, psychological instinct that tends to make these double deaths less fearful to the self-destroyer. A man will drink poison and then blow his brains out; or, as in the case of this ill-starred youth, he will cut his throat and leap over a precipice with his remaining strength.

"Thus did Solly act; and had he fallen, as he designed, into the depths below, no explanation of these incidents would ever have won to mortal mind; but he fell on a projection of the cliff; his body was thus recovered and his secret, as I believe, revealed, to play its intrinsic part in the larger mystery with which we are concerned.

"That, then, is what happened, in my opinion; and if it be argued that not a shadow of actual and tangible proof exists to support such a conclusion, I admit it. It is granted that I present nothing but a theory of events, and the reality makes it impossible to do more; but I repeat that the view I submit is based on character, than which no surer foundation of action can be discovered; and since these three men all do exactly what may be predicted of them, given the circumstances, it is hard, and for me impossible, to see how any other rational explanation of their death can be advanced.

"M. Duveen."

* * * * * * *

It remains only to add that while many accepted Duveen's conclusions, others did not, and among the latter, as he prophesied, was Amos Slanning. The West Indian held this explanation of his brother's death to be merest moonshine; though, as I explicitly learned from various Barbadian sources, the majority of Henry Slanning's friends and acquaintances in the West Indies believed that the matter must have so happened. At first they also protested; but when the novelty of the idea grew worn they came to believe it. The probability, in fact, increased rather than diminished.

As for Michael Duveen, he felt no shadow of doubt concerning his conclusions, and while declining the large honorarium offered to him, since it came from a client unconvinced, always held the case to be among his own purest analytical achievements.

"It is an example," he used to say, "of how motive may some-

times be unearthed through the track of character, when every other possible channel is blocked by death and cannot be explored. For my part, I have often doubted the most luminous circumstantial evidence, if opposed by radical facts of character; and though in many cases crime suddenly appears in soil of character where one would have suspected no such seed could spring, for temptation will break through the bars like a strong man armed; yet, as a general principle, if we know what an individual has been, and what forces have always guided and controlled his acts, we may safely judge as suspect any charges which openly contradict the massive proofs of his past conduct, but accept as worthy of close examination such actions as support them."

THE LITTLE HOUSE

HENRY CHRISTOPHER BAILEY *was born in London on February 1, 1878. He was educated at the City of London School, and at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In 1901 he joined the staff of the "Daily Telegraph." His first book was "My Lady of Orange," a romantic novel; and this was followed by "Karl of Erbach," "The Master of Gray," "Rimingtons," "Beaujeu," "Springtime," "Raoul," "The God of Clay," "Colonel Stow," "Storm and Treasure," "The Lonely Queen," "The Suburban," "The Sea Captain," "The Gentleman Adventurer," "The Highwayman," "The Gamesters," "The Young Lovers," "His Serene Highness," "The Fool," "The Plot," "The Rebel," "Knight at Arms," "The Golden Fleece," and "The Merchant Prince."*

It was not until the publication of "Call Mr. Fortune" in 1919 that Bailey essayed the detective story; but his success was immediate. The critics at once gave Dr. Fortune a place alongside of the foremost fictional detectives; and since then he has appeared as the protagonist in three other volumes of stories, each one of which has enhanced his reputation. "Mr. Fortune's Practice" appeared in 1924; and in 1926 "Mr. Fortune's Trials" was published. The fourth volume of the Fortune series was issued this year (1927) under the title of "Mr. Fortune, Please."

"The Little House," which has been selected for inclusion in this volume, appears in "Mr. Fortune, Please." It has been given the preference over the story entitled "The Business Minister," in "Call Mr. Fortune," because of its greater brevity.

THE LITTLE HOUSE

By H. C. Bailey

Mrs. Pemberton always calls it providential. She is not the only one. But when he hears her say so Mr. Fortune looks at her with a certain envy. It is one of the few cases which have frightened him.

The hand of providence, Mrs. Pemberton is convinced, sent her to Mr. Fortune: and she only just caught him. He was, with reluctance, leaving his fire to go to Scotland Yard about the man who died in Kensington Gardens when her card was brought to him. "I was to tell you Mrs. Warnham sent her, sir," the parlor maid explained.

Mr. Fortune went down to receive a little old lady dressed like Queen Victoria. She had a rosy round face and a lot of white hair. Her manner was not royal but very feminine. "Mr. Fortune! How good of you to help me! Mrs. Warnham said you would." She clasped his hands. "You were so beautiful with her."

"Mrs. Warnham is too kind——"

"You saved her dear boy's life."

"I hope it's nothing like that," said Mr. Fortune anxiously.

Mrs. Pemberton wiped her eyes and the white lilac on her black bonnet shook. "No, indeed. My darling Vivian is quite well. But she has lost her kitten, Mr. Fortune!"

Mr. Fortune controlled his emotions. "I'm so sorry. I'm afraid kittens aren't much in my way."

Her nice face looked distress. "I know. That's what I said to Mrs. Warnham. I told her you wouldn't want to be bothered with it, you would only laugh at me, like the police."

"But I'm not laughing," said Reggie.

"Please don't." Her nice voice was anxious. "She said I was to go and tell you I was really troubled and you would listen."

"She was quite right."

"I am dreadfully troubled." She wrung her little hands. "You see, it's the strange way it went and the people next door are so peculiar and I know the police don't take it seriously. The officer was quite civil and attentive, but he smiled, you know, Mr. Fortune, he just smiled at me."

"I know," said Reggie. "They do smile. I've felt it myself."

"Don't they," Mrs. Pemberton sighed. "Mrs. Warnham said you would understand."

"Yes. Yes. She's very kind. Perhaps if you began at the beginning."

Mrs. Pemberton had difficulty over that. Her nice mind worked on the theory that everybody knew all about her. The facts when patiently extracted and put in order by Reggie took this shape. She was a widow, her only son was a general commanding in India. She lived in Elector's Gate, one of those streets of big Victorian houses by the park. Her granddaughter Vivian, aged six, had lately come to live with her and brought a gray Persian kitten. With care and pains a garden had been persuaded to bloom behind the house. There Vivian and her kitten were playing when the kitten went over the wall. Vivian scrambled up high enough to look over and saw it in the paved yard of the house next door, saw a little girl run out of that house, snatch up the kitten and run in again. Vivian called to her and was not answered. Vivian came weeping to Mrs. Pemberton. Mrs. Pemberton put on her bonnet and called at the house next door. She was told that nobody had been out at the back, no kitten had come in, they had no kitten, her granddaughter must have made a mistake. They were not at all nice about it.

"Who are they?" said Reggie.

It was Miss Cabot. Miss Cabot and her father lived there. She did not really know them, only to bow to. But they had been there quite a long while, a dozen years or more, very quiet people, perfect neighbors, never the least trouble till this dreadful thing. But of course Mrs. Pemberton couldn't let them take Vivian's kitten. She went to the police station and complained. And the police wouldn't take it seriously at all.

Mr. Fortune, with her innocent blue eyes upon him, contrived to do that. It has been remarked by the envious that he has great success with old ladies. Mrs. Pemberton went away murmuring that he had been so kind. He was left wondering

how long she would think so. It did not seem to him a case over which the police would be persuaded to lose much sleep. But it had points which occupied his mind as he drove down to Scotland Yard.

He was late for his appointment. "Ye gentlemen of England who sit at home at ease!" the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department rebuked him. "This luncheon habit is growing on you, Fortune!" He pointed an accusing finger at Reggie's girth.

"It wasn't lunch," said Reggie with indignation. "I've had a most difficult and interestin' case."

Lomas sat up. "Difficult, was it? Come along then. Avery's full of ideas about it. What was the cause of death?"

Reggie stared at him. Reggie looked at Inspector Avery and murmured: "How are you?" Reggie stared again at Lomas. "Cause of death? Oh, ah. You mean the man found in Kensington Gardens."

"That is what I'm talking about," said Lomas with some bitterness. "That happens to be what we're here for."

"Nothing in it. He died from exposure."

"Exposure, sir?" Inspector Avery was disappointed. "Just being out on a spring night?"

"Takin' the winds of March," Reggie shrugged. "He wasn't a good life. Badly nourished. Rotten heart. Nothing much good about him. Drug habits—and other errors. Who was he?"

"In the foreign restaurant business, sir. Lots of money. Quite a big man in his own line. Why he should go and lie down in the gardens to die beats me."

Reggie shrugged again. "He just got there and got no farther. No vitality in him. He'd go out at a breath."

"You said something about drugs, sir?"

"Oh, he wasn't drugged when he died. Probably he had run out of his dope and life wasn't worth living. And the night frost finished him."

Lomas lay back. "That clears him up, Avery. You can go home to tea."

But Inspector Avery was not satisfied. "Mr. Fortune was worried about something, sir?"

"Yes, yes. Most interesting case. Is Elector's Gate in your division?"

"That's right, sir."

"What do you know about Mrs. Pemberton's Persian kitten?"

Lomas put up his eyeglass. "My dear fellow!" he protested.

Inspector Avery also felt a shock to his dignity. "They don't come to me about kittens, sir."

"They come to me," said Reggie sadly. "It wasn't you that smiled, then?"

"Sir?"

"Mrs. Pemberton says she went to the station and they only smiled. Quite sweet but smiling. It hurts her."

"I do remember hearing talk of it," Inspector Avery admitted. "The lady was so pathetic. But they did the usual, sir, sent a sergeant round to the house where the kitten was supposed to have gone in. The lady there said they hadn't got it. Her little niece did try to catch it, but it got away. We couldn't do any more."

Reggie lit a cigar. "'Her little niece did try to catch it,'" he repeated slowly. "Now that's very interesting." He gazed at the puzzled inspector through smoke.

"It might be if I knew anything about it," Lomas grumbled. "Why this devotion to kittens, Reginald?"

So Reggie told him the story Mrs. Pemberton had told.

"Very, very sad," Lomas sighed. "But kittens will be cats. What do you want me to do? Leave a card with deep sympathy and regret?"

Reggie shook his head. "Not one of our good listeners," he said sadly. "Didn't you notice anything? You're not taking this seriously, Lomas. When Mrs. Pemberton called about the kitten, Miss Cabot said no one had been out at the back. When the police called, she said her little niece did try to catch it."

Lomas put up his eyeglass. "Aha! The case looks black indeed!" said he. "Miss Cabot didn't know about the little niece at first and found out afterwards. A deep, dark woman, Fortune," and he smiled.

"Yes. A facetious force, the police force," Reggie nodded. "That's what annoyed Mrs. Pemberton. And now do you mind thinking? A dear old lady calls very distressed and says Miss Cabot's little girl has caught her kitten and Miss Cabot says there wasn't any little girl and bundles her out. Why so curt? Because there was a little girl and there was a kitten."

He turned on Inspector Avery. "Did your sergeant see the little girl?"

"No, sir. No occasion. He saw Miss Cabot, who was quite definite the kitten got away."

"Yes. Marked anxiety to know nothing about the kitten. Elusive little girl."

"My dear Reginald!" Lomas protested. "There're a dozen obvious explanations. The woman doesn't like cats. The little girl is a naughty little girl. The woman doesn't want to be bothered."

"No. She doesn't want to be bothered. That's what struck me."

"I fear your dear Mrs. Pemberton is a little fussy, Reginald."

"That isn't your complaint, Lomas," Reggie said sharply. "Well, well. Sorry I don't interest you." He nodded to Avery and went out.

Avery looked at Lomas with some concern. "That's all right," Lomas laughed. "Wonderful fellow. But he will see things that aren't there."

"I wish he'd been more interested in that death in the Gardens," said Avery sadly.

"Too ordinary, my dear fellow, too ordinary for Mr. Fortune."

"This kitten business rather put me off." Avery was thoughtful. "I suppose we did ought to have seen the little girl."

"Good gad!" said Lomas. "You run along home and have a nice quiet night. I don't want my inspectors seeing things."

But Inspector Avery did not go home. He had a conscience. He went back to the police station of his division. Mr. Fortune is not at Scotland Yard thought to resemble the prim little inspector. But he also has an active conscience. He went to Elector's Gate.

It is maintained by Superintendent Bell and others of his devoted admirers that he has a queer power of divining the people behind facts, a sort of sixth sense. At this he would jeer. His own account of himself is that he is so ordinary anything which isn't ordinary disturbs him. From the first he felt the vanishing of the kitten was queer. But the only credit he takes for the case, which they call one of his best, is that he brought to it a perfectly open mind. The rest was merely obedience to the rule of scientific inquiry, that one ought to try everything.

What there was to try in Elector's Gate, he had no notion. He left his car by the park and strolled down that majestically Victorian street. The range of stucco fronts was broken on one side by an opening which led to a dead wall. In this recess two little red brick houses faced each other, neat and prim, hiding behind the solemn mansions of the rest of Elector's Gate. At one corner of the opening stood Mrs. Pemberton's house. Then Miss Cabot's next door—Miss Cabot's was that little house behind it in the recess. Reggie rubbed his chin. So Miss Cabot did not live in the way suggested by an address in Elector's Gate. Quite a small place, a one or two servant house. Nice and quiet too. No traffic. No neighbors on one side. Retiring folk, the Cabots.

Reggie rang Mrs. Pemberton's bell. He had hardly been shown into her dowdy comfortable drawing-room when she hurried in crying: "Dear Mr. Fortune! But how good of you! Have you found out anything?"

"No. I came to see what I could find here."

"Oh, but I'm so glad! Such a queer thing has happened. Let me show you." She led him away into a little sitting-room and took from a drawer in the writing-table a piece of coarse blue paper. "Look! When I came back from you that was lying in the garden."

Reggie laid it on the table. It was a queer shape, it had a rough black line round the edges.

"You see. It's meant for a kitten!"

"Yes. It's meant for a kitten," said Reggie gravely. "Somebody drew a kitten on packing paper—with a piece of coal—and then tore the paper along the line—so as to make a paper kitten. Somebody who's not very old." He shivered a little. "Has your little granddaughter seen it?"

"No, Vivian was out when we found it. She has gone to a party. I was rather glad, you know. It seemed mean to tease her."

Reggie folded the paper and put it in his pocket-book. His round face was pale and angry.

"Oh, did you want to talk to her about it?" Mrs. Pemberton fluttered.

"I don't want anyone to talk to her about it."

"I'm so glad. Vivian is only six, you see, and——"

"And nobody but Vivian has ever seen the little girl next door?"

"Why no. I never thought of it like that. No, indeed. We didn't know there was a little girl. Oh, but Mr. Fortune, I'm sure there was if Vivian said so."

"Did Vivian notice what she was like?"

"Poor child she was so distressed," Mrs. Pemberton apologized for her. "She said it was a nasty, dirty little girl. Children will talk like that, you know, when they're upset. It doesn't mean anything."

Reggie did not answer. He walked to the window. Mrs. Pemberton's garden was a pleasant place of crazy paving and rock plants. The little house next door had a bare, paved yard.

"Oh, wouldn't you like to go out?" Mrs. Pemberton cried. "I could show you just where the paper fell."

"No, I won't go out." Reggie turned away. "Good-by, Mrs. Pemberton. Don't let anyone talk to anybody. Don't let anybody know who I am. Don't let Vivian think about the business."

"Mr. Fortune! You mean there's something dreadful?"

"The worst of it for Vivian is that she's lost a kitten. There's nothing else to trouble you."

"But you're troubled about something."

"Yes, that's what I'm for," said Mr. Fortune. "Good-by."

It was an hour which Lomas is wont to give to his club. He was before the smoking-room fire, he was pronouncing the doom of the last new play, when Reggie looked round the door, caught his eye and vanished. Lomas went after him at leisure. He was in the hall, tapping an impatient foot. "My dear fellow, what's the matter? Has the kitten had foul play?"

"Come on," said Reggie.

Lomas came on with his usual studied jauntiness, to be thrust into a car and driven away at Reggie's side. "Why this stealthy haste, Reginald?" he protested. "Why thus abduct my blameless youth? Miserable man, where are you taking me?"

Mr. Fortune was not amused. "We're going to Avery's damned police station," he said. He spread out on his knee the blue paper. "That's why."

"Good gad!" Lomas groaned. "A kitten! An infant's effort at creating a kitten. Oh, my dear Reginald!"

"Yes. An infant's effort at creating a kitten," Reggie repeated. "Exactly that. That's what frightened me. It was flung over into Mrs. Pemberton's garden this afternoon."

"Tut, tut. Not quite nice. Designed, I fear, to harrow the feelings of the bereaved."

Reggie drew a long breath. "Do you mind not being funny?" he said in a low voice. "I'm scared."

"My dear fellow! Oh, my dear fellow! What on earth for?"

"For the child who made that." Reggie put it away again. "My God, don't you feel it? There's something devilish in that little house."

Lomas was shaken. Strong language is very rare on the lips of Reggie Fortune. "I can't say I feel anything," he said slowly. "What do you want to do?"

"See Avery about the people. Here we are."

Inspector Avery was still at the station. Inspector Avery showed no surprise at seeing them. "I told you to go home, young fellow," said Lomas.

"Yes, sir. I know. I was a bit worried about that kitten case."

"Oh, you were, were you? Mr. Fortune's got it very bad."

Avery's keen face turned to Reggie. "About the little girl, sir?" he said eagerly.

"Yes, yes. What do you know about the little girl?"

"Nobody knows anything. That's just it. It don't look right to my mind."

"No. It isn't right," said Reggie. "Send two men to watch the house."

"I've put one there, sir."

"The deuce you have!" Lomas exclaimed.

"Good. But we'll have two, please. One to follow if the child's taken away. One to stand by whatever happens. The constable on the beat must keep in touch with them."

"Right, sir. Just a moment." Avery went out with visible satisfaction to give the orders.

"You won't mind me, will you?" said the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department with some bitterness. "But aren't you going rather fast, Fortune?"

"No. We're going far too slow."

"I can't let you commit the police to anything, you know."

"I know. You like a crime finished before you begin. Mr. Lomas, his theory of police work. Well, I've committed you to watching a suspected house. Ever heard of that being done before?"

Lomas, however, kept his temper. "You can have it watched, if it amuses you. But there's no reasonable ground for suspicion."

"Oh my aunt!" Reggie murmured.

Avery bustled in. "I've got that done, sir. Now is there anything else?"

"Yes, I'm not satisfied there's anything in it," said Lomas sharply. "What have you got against these people, Avery?"

"Mr. Lomas touches the spot," Reggie nodded. "Who are these people, Avery?"

"Ah, that's what I'd like to know," said Inspector Avery with relish. "Very retiring people, sir. Kind of secluded."

"Retiring be hanged," Lomas cried. "You've nothing against them but this stuff about a kitten and a girl."

"Pretty queer stuff, isn't it, sir? Girl is seen taking a kitten, owner of the kitten is told nobody there saw it, we're told the girl did see it, like I said. But there's more to it than that. Nobody round there knew there was a little girl in that house, nobody's ever seen her, nobody's heard of her."

"Why should they?"

"Ever lived next door to a house with a child, Lomas?" said Reggie wearily. "You notice it. But Mrs. Pemberton lives next door and she didn't know there was a child in that house."

"Nobody knew. They won't hardly believe it," said Avery.

"How the deuce can you tell?"

Avery smiled. "The men get to know the servants in their beats, sir. I've had some inquiries made. That house, there's Miss Cabot, handsome lady not so young as she was, and her father and an old married couple o' servants very stand-offish. Been there a dozen years, living very quiet, never any guests and as for a child—well, the servants in Elector's Gate laugh at it. If there is a child, they keep her in the cupboard, one of 'em said. But there is, Miss Cabot owned up to her."

"There was a child," said Reggie gravely, and took out the blue paper kitten.

Inspector Avery gasped at it. "Kind of uncanny, sir." He puzzled over it. "I don't know what to make of it, sir."

"There was a child in that little house wanted to create a kitten. She only had packing paper, she only had a bit of coal to draw with, she had no scissors to cut it out. This was the best she could do. She wanted to tell that other child next door something about her kitten. She threw this over the wall."

"I don't like it, sir."

"What's it all come to?" Lomas cried. "There's a lonely child playing tricks."

Reggie turned on him. "There is a child in that little house living a queer life. And the only paper she can get hold of came off a parcel. It happened to be a parcel of scientific apparatus."

"Are you sure about that, sir?" Avery cried eagerly.

"This is the sort of stuff they always use for glass." Reggie fingered it. "Look at the scrap of a label: 'ette & Co.' That's Burette's. First-class firm. What are the Cabots doing in that little house that they want glass from Burette's and keep a child shut up and squalid and miserable?"

"Squalid?" Lomas took up the word.

"The Pemberton child saw her. She was dirty."

"The house is kept as clean as a pin, they say," Avery frowned.

"Yes. Quite clean. And the hidden child is nasty and dirty."

"And they're at some scientific work. Do you think they're doing experiments on the child, sir?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything. But I'm frightened."

"We've got 'em all right, whatever their game is," Avery said fiercely.

"And the child?" Reggie murmured.

Lomas stood up. "You win," he said. "Sorry, Reginald. My error. Well, I haven't wasted much time. We'll go through with it now. First points to work on, who are the Cabots and what is it that Burette's send them? They're to be watched wherever they go, Avery—and their servants. I'll put Bell on to the case to-night. Report to him. We can deal with Burette's in half an hour in the morning. Anything else, Reginald?"

"Yes. You might find out if anybody lost a little girl some time ago."

Lomas shrugged. "We can look up the records. Rather an off-chance, isn't it? Whoever she is, they'd get hold of her quietly, these quiet people."

"Oh, it isn't ordinary kidnapping," Reggie said wearily. "I say, Avery, for God's sake don't let the Cabots know they're being watched. They might do the child in to-night."

"Good Lord, sir! No, I don't think it. If they know they're watched they'd know they couldn't get away with a murder."

"We might not be able to prove murder. He's a man of science, Mr. Cabot is. Warn your men to be careful."

"We can't have a search-warrant on this evidence," Lomas frowned. "We can't do anything to-night. Begad, I'll have somebody get into the house in the morning."

"Yes, I'm going," said Reggie.

"My dear fellow!"

"You want a doctor to see that child."

That night lives in the memory of Mr. Fortune. He could not sleep. It is a condition otherwise unknown to him. He drove early to Scotland Yard and found Superintendent Bell fresh and hearty from a night watch.

"You've got something, Mr. Fortune. They're queer folk, these Cabots. Where do you think they went last night? Night club, if you please. The Doodah Club. Yes, the old man and the woman living in that quiet style, they go off to the Doodah which is about as hot as we've got. Well, as soon as I heard they were there, I sent round one of the night club experts. He knew the Cabots by sight right enough. They're pretty regular at the Doodah. He made out that Cabot is known there as Smithson and runs some sort of an accountant's business in Soho. Nothing on our books against him. But we're looking into Smithson & Co., of course."

"Yes. Have you found anything about a lost child?"

Bell shook his head. "We've got no record of any to fit this little girl. Not many children get lost nowadays. I'm still looking about. But it's a bit of a long shot, sir."

"I know. And Burette's?"

"Harland's on that, sir. We'll know all about their end of the business before lunch."

"Now who's going with me to the house? I want some fellow with a nerve and lots of chat."

Superintendent Bell looked at him with solicitude. "Are you set on going yourself, sir? If you don't mind my saying so——"

"I do," Reggie smiled.

"Well, I knew you would," Bell sighed. "You can't do better than Avery, sir. He's a little bull-terrier."

"Yes. I thought that myself. But is he chatty?"

"He can keep it up. He's a politician."

"Oh my aunt!" said Reggie.

Some time later two men in the uniform of the inspectors of

the Metropolitan Water Board strolled into Elector's Gate. A street sweeper asked one of them for a match and over his cigarette remarked: "All out but the woman servant. Cabot and Miss Cabot went off together. The man servant's gone to the pub."

The water inspectors strolled on. "That's a bit of luck, sir," said Avery.

"No. That's Bell making a fuss down at Smithson & Co. I thought he would draw 'em. Your fellows said the manservant was in the pub till it closed. I thought he'd be on the doorstep when it opened—if master was out of the way. Now then. Lots of patter, please."

Avery rang the tradesmen's bell of the little house. After some minutes the side door opened to display a gaunt woman in black who scowled. Avery was sorry to trouble her, but they were going over the water fittings. She objected. Avery was very sorry, regular inspection, must go through with it, the law was the law. "Constable over there, mum, go and ask him if you like." They were admitted. "All the taps, please, then the run of the pipes, then the cistern. All fittings. Now then, where's the main?" He listened professionally. "Ah, I thought so. Just have a look at the scullery, mate. Now, mum, upstairs if you please." He swept her on before him, still talking about water and the law.

Reggie went into the kitchen, crossed to the scullery and turned on taps so that a noise of splashing water arose and came back to the kitchen. He called out, "Taps running, mate," and was answered: "Right-o! Stand by the main," and heard Avery in continuous eloquence and the servant grumbling. He went swiftly from room to room, such rooms as upholsterers furnish to their own taste, and saw no child's gear nor any mark that a child would make. He could hear Avery moving about upstairs arguing about the lead of pipes and having doors opened. Avery was not missing anything. "Hallo, mate!" Avery called. "Try the main tap. Now up to the cistern if you please, mum." Talking, he climbed.

Reggie stood in the hall. There was a cupboard under the stairs. He opened that, saw darkness and in darkness the gleam of eyes. He went in. "My dear," he said gently. "What's your name?"

There was no answer but panting breath.

He switched on an electric torch and saw a little girl cowering

in the corner. Her face was pinched and dirty, she seemed to have no body so she was huddled shrinking from him.

"I'm friends," said Reggie and reached for her hand. "It's all right." His fingers moved along the lean bare arm, about her neck. "Where's the kitten?"

Her face shook. "It died. It did. It's in the dust," she gasped.

"I'm friends," Reggie said again. "Wait: just wait. It's all right."

He shut off the torch and slipped out of the cupboard. The feet of Avery were heavy on the stair.

"I say, mate. Waste pipes at the back," Reggie called.

"Have a look at 'em, Bill. Have a look at 'em," said Avery and held the gaunt woman in conversation in the hall.

Reggie went out to the paved yard. While he watched the scullery window his arm slid into the dustbin and brought out a bass basket. He buttoned that into his jacket and came back calling, "That's all right, mate. Shall I shut off the taps?"

"Shut 'em off, Bill. Come on. Good day, mum. Sorry to trouble you. Duty is duty."

The gaunt woman grumbling about a lot of fuss and nonsense slammed the door on them.

A chauffeur came out of the bonnet of his car as they passed him. "Watch it. Watch it," Avery muttered and hurried on. It was hard work to keep up with Reggie.

He made for a post office and telling Avery to get a taxi shut himself into the telephone box. "Superintendent Bell? Fortune speaking. What have you got about the Cabots? Somebody interviewing them at the Smithson & Co. Office? Let him keep 'em busy. Child in the house in danger of foul play. Yes. Death. Instant danger. I want a search-warrant quick. Right. At my house." He joined Avery in the taxi and they drove away.

"No sign of the child, sir," Avery began. "But there was——"

"I saw the child," said Reggie. "She's still alive. I got the kitten too. He isn't." The bass basket was produced and from it the stiff cold body of a Persian kitten.

"Dead, eh? Looks all right too. Did it die natural, sir?"

Reggie pointed to the eyes. "No. Not natural. There isn't much natural in that house." He shivered.

"What did they want to kill it for?"

"What do they want to keep the child in a dark cupboard for?"

"Had her there when we came, I reckon."

"Yes. She's out sometimes. But she's used to the dark."

"The devils," said Avery heartily. "But what is the game, sir? Scientific experiments? There was a room I couldn't get into. The woman said the master had the key. But I made out it had water laid on."

"Yes. Laboratories have." The taxi turned into Wimpole Street and stopped. "You go on to the Yard and see Bell. I've got to look into the kitten." But he went first to the telephone and talked to his hospital and asked for a certain nurse.

He was in his own clothes again; he was eating lunch without appetite when Bell came. "Got the warrant?" He started up. "Good. Where are the Cabots?"

"I couldn't say for the moment, sir. Our fellows had orders to keep 'em talking as long as they could. But there wasn't anything much to go on. That business looks all right. They do accountants' work for the foreign restaurants."

"The man who died in Kensington Gardens," Reggie murmured.

"Good Lord, sir!" Bell stared. "He was in the restaurant trade, sure enough. And he was a drug fiend, you said."

"Come on, come on. I want to get back to that child before the Cabots."

But as soon as the car was moving Bell returned to his point. "About the drugs, sir. What did you make of the house this morning? Avery said there was a room might be a laboratory. Burette's say they've been supplying Mr. Cabot with laboratory glass ware for years."

"Yes. I think we shall find a laboratory. The kitten has been drugged. The little girl has been drugged."

"What's their game, sir? Some kind of scientific experiments with drugs?"

Reggie shuddered. "They've been making experiments. Not for science. For the devil. They killed the kitten because she liked it. And she made her paper kitten to tell the other little girl it was gone. Silly, isn't it?" He laughed nervously. "This car's damned slow, Bell."

"We're almost there, sir."

"Almost! Nice word, almost! My God!"

"Steady, sir, steady." Bell laid an anxious hand on his arm. "I want you, you know. I'll ask for the child first."

The car swung into Elector's Gate and stopped just short of the recess in which the little house stood. As Bell sprang out a large man on the pavement met him. "Both of 'em drove straight here from the office, sir. Only just gone in."

Bell strode on to the house and rang and rang again. It was some while before the door moved. Then it opened only a little way and a man's flabby face with watery eyes looked around it. "I am a police officer. I have a warrant to enter this house." Bell pushed the door back and went in with Reggie and on their heels two large men followed. Silent and adroit they took the manservant and put him into the street where careful hands received him, and shut the door.

Bell stood still in the hall listening. There was a murmur of voices in one of the rooms. Its door opened. The gaunt woman came out. "Well?" she said defiantly. "Who may you be?"

The large men swept her aside. Bell and Reggie went into the room.

Two people were in it. A plump old man, neatly professional in his clothes, with a large brown face under his white hair, the face of a clever fellow who enjoyed his life, a woman darker than he, black-haired, black-browed, a woman on a large scale who might have been handsome before she was full-blown. She looked at them with gleaming eyes, and the lines were deep about her big mouth. She laughed, a shrill sound that began suddenly and suddenly ended.

"What is all this, gentlemen?" the man said.

"Mr. and Miss Cabot, alias Smithson?" Bell inquired.

"My name is Cabot and this is my daughter. The name of my firm is Smithson & Co. But you have the advantage of me."

"I am Superintendent Bell. I have a warrant to search your house."

"Very good of the police to take this interest in me. May I ask why?"

"I want the child you have here."

Mr. Cabot looked at his daughter. "Oh, our poor little darling," he said slowly.

"What's her name?" Bell snapped.

"I beg your pardon?" Mr. Cabot suddenly became aware of him. "Her name? Why, Grace of course."

"Grace of course?"

"Grace Cabot, sir. I see that you don't know our family tragedy. My poor son's child is mentally defective. Practically imbecile. It has——"

"Since she came here or before?"

Mr. Cabot licked his lips. "I see that you have picked up some scandal. She was——"

"Where is she?"

"Oh, I'll find her for you," Miss Cabot cried.

But Reggie was at the door first. He went before her into the hall. Miss Cabot followed him and calling "Grace, Grace," ran upstairs.

A moment he stood, then pointed and one of the large men went heavily after her. Reggie moved to the cupboard under the stairs and unlocked it and looked into the dark. "I'm friends," he said very gently. "Come, dear. I'm friends." And above Miss Cabot's shrill voice called "Grace! Grace!"

He could see something faintly white. He heard a moan. "It's all over now," he said. "All right now. Friends, just friends."

"Grace! Grace!" the shrill voice came nearer.

"No, no, no," the child sobbed in the dark.

Reggie went in, groped for her and gathered her into his arms. She was very frail. "My dear," he whispered. She was carried out into the light, shaking, trying to hide her dirty dress.

Miss Cabot ran down the stairs, "So you've found the dear creature!" she cried. Her arms shot out.

Reggie swung on his heel, offering her a solid shoulder. "Hold her wrist," he said.

The large man behind her had both arms in a grip that brought a scream out of her. A syringe fell tinkling to the floor. And Miss Cabot began to swear.

"Take the child out of this," Reggie said fiercely. "Take her to my place." But she nestled up against him and moaned. "All right. All right. Get the woman off." Handcuffs snapped upon Miss Cabot's wrists while she bit and struggled and blasphemed. She was thrust out to the ready hands in the street.

"A beauty, she is," one of the large men muttered.

And then silence came down upon the house. The child felt it, raised her wan starved face from Reggie's shoulder. "Is she gone?" she murmured, looked about her, saw nothing but those

solid, comfortable men and listened again to the silence. "Weally, weally gone?"

"Really gone. She'll never hurt you any more," Reggie said. "There's only friends for you now. You're coming home with me. Nice home. But just wait a minute. This man will hold you quite safe." He persuaded her to go to the arms of one of the detectives. "Take her out into the air at the back. I shan't be long, dear."

He picked up the syringe carefully, he turned into the room where Bell watched Cabot. The old man stood by the window looking out. His face was yellow. But he had control of his nerves and his voice. "Perhaps you will tell me what all this means, superintendent?" he was saying.

"You'll hear what it means all right," Bell growled.

"I see my daughter arrested——"

"Yes. She didn't like it, did she?" Reggie spoke to hurt. The old man swung round. "Who is this person, pray?"

"That's Mr. Fortune."

"Oh, the great Mr. Fortune! Why trouble him with our poor affairs?"

"A pleasure," said Reggie.

"So happy to interest you! And will you be good enough to tell me why you have arrested my daughter?"

"We've found a child in your house who has been tortured."

"I suppose she told you so," the old man chuckled. "Good evidence you have found, Mr. Fortune. The child's an imbecile."

"We shan't use her evidence," said Reggie. "You won't torture her any more, Mr. Cabot."

The old man grinned. "Is the child dead, sir?" Bell cried.

Reggie did not answer for a moment. He was watching the old man's face. "No," he said slowly. "Oh no. Miss Cabot tried to kill her just now. But it didn't happen."

The old man was breathing hard. "A poor story, isn't it?" he sneered. "You won't make much of it in court, Mr. Fortune. Is that all, pray?"

"No. I should like to see your laboratory."

"My laboratory? Oh, that's too kind of you! A very humble little place where I play with chemical experiments. Do you really want to see it?"

"We're going to see it," said Bell.

"But I shall be delighted to show you."

Bell looked at Reggie who nodded. The old man went upstairs

between them. He unlocked a door and they came into a room fitted with a long bench and shelves and sink and much chemical apparatus. Reggie moved to and fro looking at the array of bottles, opening cupboards. There were many things which interested him.

"Ah, do you like that?" The old man came forward as he lingered by an arrangement of flasks and glass tube. "It's a method of my own." He became technical, skilled fingers moved demonstrating. "And here,"—he turned away and opened a drawer and bent over it,—"here you see——"

"Yes. I see," said Reggie and caught the hand that was going to his mouth.

Bell took the old man in his solid grip. The hand was opened and produced a white pellet.

"Not that way, Mr. Cabot," said Reggie. "Not yet."

"You go where your daughter's gone," said Bell and called to the detective in the hall.

"I shall have some things to think of, gentlemen," the old man grinned as he was led away.

"You will. And plenty of time to think. In this world and the next," said Bell fiercely.

The old man laughed.

Reggie and Bell looked at each other and Reggie shivered and "Thank God," he said. He went to the window and leaned out to see the child with the big detective in the free air below.

"What was it the old scoundrel was doing here, sir? Kind of vivisecting the child?"

"Oh no, no. The little girl was a side line. He was making narcotic drugs—dope. Very neat plant."

"Turning out dope? He's been doing that for years?"

"Yes, yes. Prosperous industry."

"But why the child? For testing the drugs?"

"No. He wouldn't need her for tests. No. They drugged her for fun. You haven't got to the child's story yet. Lots of work to do yet."

"What did you want me to work on, sir?"

"Go over this place. Go over the Cabot's past. Go and look for somebody that's lost a child. Good-by."

The big detective in the yard, nursing the little girl with awkward gentleness, grinned embarrassment at Reggie. "I'm not much of a hand at this, sir. But she don't seem to like me to put her down."

"No. Nice to have somebody to hold on to, isn't it, shrimp?" Reggie touched her cheek. "Come and hold on to me." He held out his arms. For the first time he saw something like a smile on that pinched face. She swayed towards him. "Come along. We're going to a pretty house and a kind jolly lady and everybody there is waiting to love you."

She was wrapped in a rug in Superintendent Bell's car, she sat on Reggie's knee watching the trees in the park rush by, the busy, gay streets. Suddenly she clutched at him. "Is it weal?" she cried. "Weally weal?"

"Yes. It's all real now," Reggie said and put his hand over hers. "Jolly things, real things."

When the car stopped at his house, his parlor maid had the door open before he reached it and watched him carry the child in with benign amusement which yielded to pity. "Shall I take her, sir?" she said eagerly.

"She's all right, thanks. Has Nurse Cary come?"

"Here I am, Mr. Fortune," a small buxom woman ran down the stairs. "Well!" She looked at the child. "I'm going to like you ever so much. Please like me."

It was difficult not to like those pretty pink and white cheeks, that kind voice. Again something like a smile came on the pinched, wan face.

"Oh, my dear," said Nurse Cary with tears in her voice and her eyes. She gave a glance at Mr. Fortune.

"Yes. I know," he said quickly.

"I'm going to make you so beautifully cozy," said Nurse Cary. "You just come and try." She took the child to her comfortable bosom.

Upstairs in the bathroom filthy clothes were stripped from the starved little body. But it was marked with something worse than dirt, punctured marks on the arms and here and there a rash. Nurse Cary looked at Mr. Fortune.

"Yes, I know," he said softly. "They've been giving her drugs."

"But why?"

"For fun."

"Devils," said Nurse Cary under her breath.

"Yes. I think so," said Mr. Fortune. He was handling the filthy clothes. They had been good honest stuff once. He looked close, made out a bit of tape with a name in stitched letters—Rose Harford. He turned to the child lying in the

steaming water, Nurse Cary's hands busy upon her. "Well, isn't it jolly, Rose?"

"So you're Rose, are you?" Nurse Cary smiled. "My little Rose."

"Mummy's Wose," the child murmured.

Mr. Fortune went out. The telephone called to Scotland Yard. "Is that Lomas? Fortune speaking. The child is Rose Harford. There's a mother—or was. Get on to it."

* * * * * * *

The small Rose in golden pyjamas was among many pillows watching Mr. Fortune and Nurse Cary set out a farm on her bed. They were being very funny about the hens, but she did not laugh; she watched with grave, tranquil eyes and sometimes stroked her beautiful pyjamas. Mr. Fortune was called away.

At Scotland Yard he found a conference, Lomas, Bell, Avery. "My dear fellow! How's the patient?"

"She'll come through with luck. But it's a long job. They've made a vile mess of her."

"Hanging's too good for that pair," Bell sighed. "And we can't even hang 'em."

"No, no. I hope not. They'll feel what they get, quite a lot, the family Cabot."

"They've done enough to be hanged more than once," said Avery fiercely. "You remember that fellow who died in Kensington Gardens, Mr. Fortune? He used to get his drugs from Smithson & Co."

"Yes. You were right about him, Avery. I ought to have seen there was something to work on there."

Avery laughed. "You're the one that's been right, sir. Do you remember how we made fun of you about the kitten? If you hadn't taken that up, the Cabots would be playing at hell now quite happy and comfortable."

"Don't recall my awful past, Avery," Lomas said. "It's not respectful. My dear Reginald, you're a disturbing fellow. You're sapping the foundations of the criminal courts of this country."

"No flowers, by request," Reggie murmured.

"You don't work by evidence, like a reasonable man."

"My only aunt!" Reggie was annoyed. "I use nothing but evidence. That's why I don't get on with lawyers and policemen. I believe evidence, Lomas, old thing. That's what bothers you."

"You do bother me. And now will you kindly tell me the whole history of the Cabot affair."

"Quite clear, isn't it? Cabot was a skilled chemist. The trouble in the dope trade is always to get supplies. He solved that by getting raw materials and making the stuff. He found his customers at the night clubs and the restaurants he was in touch with through the Smithson & Co. accountant business. He distributed probably by post from Smithson & Co."

"That's right, sir," Bell nodded. "We've got on the track of that now. Big trade he did. Lots of poor fools he must have sent to the devil."

"Very neat, Reginald," Lomas smiled. "You omit to explain the little girl."

"Oh, that's revenge. Revenge on somebody. Probably her father and mother."

"Did you get that out of the child?" said Lomas quickly.

"No. The child mustn't be asked anything about the past. Haven't you got that clear? No evidence from her. She mustn't come into court."

"My dear fellow, we don't want her. There's two of you to swear to attempted murder and your medical evidence. That's all right. I only wanted to know how you arrived at the mother."

"Have you found her at last?"

"Three months ago George and Rose Harford were convicted of dealing in drugs. The man is a young accountant, the woman an actress. They lived in a Bloomsbury flat and often went to one of the Soho restaurants. A waiter there gave information that the woman had been offering drugs. They were arrested. Dope was found in the pockets of the man's coat and the woman's cloak. More dope in their flat. A clear case and they were both convicted. Some time after they were in prison the woman complained that she had heard nothing of her daughter, whom another actress in the flats had promised to look after. Well, the prison people had inquiries made for her. It took time. The actress had gone on tour. When they found her, her story was that Mrs. Harford's sister had called and taken the child away. The prison authorities told Mrs. Harford and she said she had no sister extant. So at last it worked round to us."

"Yes. At last. And you've had the mother in jail three months—wondering."

"Wondering if there was a God," said Bell solemnly.

"Well—it's a black business," Lomas shrugged. "See your way, Reginald?"

"Oh, I suppose the Cabot woman wanted George Harford herself. When he married, she looked for a chance to make the wife suffer. She bided her time. And sent father and mother to prison and took the child and tortured her. Patient woman."

"The Harfords have been out of England. The man had a job for his firm in France. They hadn't been back long before this happened to them."

"What evidence have you got?"

"That drunken dog of a manservant wants to turn King's evidence. He says he was under the thumb of his wife——"

"I dare say he was. Have you seen her? Born brute."

"His story is that his wife was turned on to plant the dope in the Harford flat. The waiter put the stuff in their coat pockets while they were at dinner. We can't lay our hands on the waiter. Several people have vanished since the Cabots were taken. George Harford says he knew Miss Cabot at a night club, never knew her well, just danced with her. His wife had never seen her. Both of them always declared they knew nothing of the dope."

"Yes. Gross miscarriage of justice, Lomas."

"Clear case," Lomas shrugged. "Nobody's fault."

"Yes. That's very gratifying. Great consolation for the Harfords. Cheering for the child."

"We'll do all we can, of course. Put 'em right before the world, set 'em on their feet again and all that. An unfortunate affair. Shakes confidence in police work."

Mr. Fortune stared at him. Mr. Fortune drew a long breath. "Yes. That is one way of looking at it," he murmured.

"Thank God for the kitten, sir," Bell said.

Mr. Fortune turned large grave eyes on him. "Yes, that's another," he said.

"I'd call it all providential," Bell said earnestly. "Just providential."

Wonder grew in Mr. Fortune's eyes. "Providential!" he said. "Well, well."

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

MAURICE LEBLANC *was born at Rouen, France, in 1864. He was the brother of Georgette Leblanc, the actress, who married Maurice Maeterlinck. He began writing at an early age, but his first books met with small success. It was not until 1906, when he created the famous character of Arsène Lupin, gentleman-thief, that his wide literary popularity began. Fame then came speedily both in France and England; and he was created Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur. He died in Paris in 1926.*

The books recounting the exploits of Arsène Lupin almost immediately supplanted Gaboriau's Lecoq stories in public favor. The first to appear was "Arsène Lupin: Gentleman-Cambrioleur." Then came "Arsène Lupin contre Herlock Sholmès"; "L'Aiguille creuse" ("The Hollow Needle"); "Le bouchon de cristal" ("The Crystal Stopper"); "813"; "Le triangle d'or" ("The Golden Triangle"); "L'Ille aux Trente Cercueils" ("The Secret of Sarak"); "Les Dents du Tigre" ("The Teeth of the Tiger"); "La Confession d'Arsène Lupin" ("The Confessions of Arsène Lupin"); "Les Huits Coups de l'Horloge" ("The Eight Strokes of the Clock"); and "La Comtesse de Cagliostro" ("Memoirs of Arsène Lupin"). The English versions of these books are generally excellent, the translations having been made, in the main, by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos.

Among Maurice Leblanc's earlier books are "Une femme" (his first novel published in 1893); "Ceux qui souffrent"; "Les heures de mystère"; "Les lèvres jointes"; "Enthoussiasme"; and "Gueule-rouge-80 chevaux."

"Footprints in the Snow," reprinted herewith, is the seventh adventure in "The Eight Strokes of the Clock."

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

(Des pas sur la neige)

By Maurice Leblanc

*To Prince Serge Rénine,**

Boulevard Haussmann,
Paris

La Roncière
" near Bassicourt,
" 14 November.

" My Dear Friend,—

" You must be thinking me very ungrateful. I have been here three weeks; and you have had not one letter from me! Not a word of thanks! And yet I ended by realizing what terrible death you saved me and understanding the secret of that terrible business! But indeed, indeed I couldn't help it! I was in such a state of prostration after it all! I needed rest and solitude so badly! Was I to stay in Paris? Was I to continue my expeditions with you? No, no, no! I had had enough adventures! Other people's are very interesting, I admit. But when one is one's self the victim and barely escapes with one's life? . . . Oh, my dear friend, how horrible it was! Shall I ever forget it? . . .

" Here, at la Roncière, I enjoy the greatest peace. My old spinster cousin Ermelin pets and coddles me like an invalid. I am getting back my color and am very well, physically . . . so much so, in fact, that I no longer ever think of interesting myself in other people's business. Never again! For instance (I am only telling you this because you are incorrigible, as inquisitive as any old charwoman, and always ready to busy yourself with things that don't concern you), yesterday I was present at a rather curious meeting. Antoinette had taken me to the inn at

* The name adopted by Arsène Lupin in " The Eight Strokes of the Clock."

Bassicourt, where we were having tea in the public room, among the peasants (it was market-day), when the arrival of three people, two men and a woman, caused a sudden pause in the conversation.

"One of the men was a fat farmer in a long blouse, with a jovial, red face, framed in white whiskers. The other was younger, was dressed in corduroy and had lean, yellow, cross-grained features. Each of them carried a gun slung over his shoulder. Between them was a short, slender young woman, in a brown cloak and a fur cap, whose rather thin and extremely pale face was surprisingly delicate and distinguished-looking.

"'Father, son and daughter-in-law,' whispered my cousin.

"'What! Can that charming creature be the wife of that clod-hopper?'

"'And the daughter-in-law of Baron de Gorne.'

"'Is the old fellow over there a baron?'

"'Yes, descended from a very ancient, noble family which used to own the château in the old days. He has always lived like a peasant: a great hunter, a great drinker, a great litigant, always at law with somebody, now very nearly ruined. His son Mathias was more ambitious and less attached to the soil and studied for the bar. Then he went to America. Next, the lack of money brought him back to the village, whereupon he fell in love with a young girl in the nearest town. The poor girl consented, no one knows why, to marry him; and for five years past she has been leading the life of a hermit, or rather of a prisoner, in a little manor-house close by, the Manoir-au-Puits, the Well Manor.'

"'With the father and the son?' I asked.

"'No, the father lives at the far end of the village, on a lonely farm.'

"'And is Master Mathias jealous?'

"'A perfect tiger!'

"'Without reason?'

"'Without reason, for Natalie de Gorne is the straightest woman in the world and it is not her fault if a handsome young man has been hanging around the manor-house for the past few months. However, the de Gornes can't get over it.'

"'What, the father neither?'

"'The handsome young man is the last descendant of the people who bought the château long ago. This explains old de Gorne's hatred. Jérôme Vignal—I know him and am very

fond of him—is a good-looking fellow and very well off; and he has sworn to run off with Natalie de Gorne. It's the old man who says so, whenever he has had a drop too much. There, listen!'

"The old chap was sitting among a group of men who were amusing themselves by making him drink and plying him with questions. He was already a little bit 'on' and was holding forth with a tone of indignation and a mocking smile which formed the most comic contrast:

"'He's wasting his time, I tell you, the coxcomb! It's no manner of use his poaching round our way and making sheep's-eyes at the wench. . . . The coverts are watched! If he comes too near, it means a bullet, eh, Mathias?'

"He gripped his daughter-in-law's hand:

"'And then the little wench knows how to defend herself too,' he chuckled. 'Eh, you don't want any admirers, do you, Natalie?'

"The young wife blushed, in her confusion at being addressed in these terms, while her husband growled:

"'You'd do better to hold your tongue, father. There are things one doesn't talk about in public.'

"'Things that affect one's honor are best settled in public,' retorted the old one. 'Where I'm concerned, the honor of the de Gornes comes before everything; and that fine spark, with his Paris airs, sha'n't . . .'

"He stopped short. Before him stood a man who had just come in and who seemed to be waiting for him to finish his sentence. The newcomer was a tall, powerfully-built young fellow, in riding-kit, with a hunting-crop in his hand. His strong and rather stern face was lighted up by a pair of fine eyes in which shone an ironical smile.

"'Jérôme Vignal,' whispered my cousin.

"The young man seemed not at all embarrassed. On seeing Natalie, he made a low bow; and, when Mathias de Gorne took a step forward, he eyed him from head to foot, as though to say:

"'Well, what about it?'

"'And his attitude was so haughty and contemptuous that the de Gornes unslung their guns and took them in both hands, like sportsmen about to shoot. The son's expression was very fierce.

"Jérôme was quite unmoved by the threat. After a few seconds, turning to the inn-keeper, he remarked:

"'Oh, I say! I came to see old Vasseur. But his shop is shut.

Would you mind giving him the holster of my revolver? It wants a stitch or two.'

"He handed the holster to the inn-keeper and added, laughing:

"'I'm keeping the revolver, in case I need it. You never can tell!'

"Then, still very calmly, he took a cigarette from a silver case, lit it and walked out. We saw him through the window vaulting on his horse and riding off at a slow trot.

"Old de Gorne tossed off a glass of brandy, swearing most horribly.

"His son clapped his hand to the old man's mouth and forced him to sit down. Natalie de Gorne was weeping beside them. . . .

"That's my story, dear friend. As you see, it's not tremendously interesting and does not deserve your attention. There's no mystery in it and no part for you to play. Indeed, I particularly insist that you should not seek a pretext for any untimely interference. Of course, I should be glad to see the poor thing protected: she appears to be a perfect martyr. But, as I said before, let us leave other people to get out of their own troubles and go no farther with our little experiments. . . ."

* * * * * * *

Rénine finished reading the letter, read it over again and ended by saying:

"That's it. Everything's right as right can be. She doesn't want to continue our little experiments, because this would make the seventh and because she's afraid of the eighth, which under the terms of our agreement has a very particular significance. She doesn't want to . . . and she does want to . . . without seeming to want to."

He rubbed his hands. The letter was an invaluable witness to the influence which he had gradually, gently and patiently gained over Hortense Daniel. It betrayed a rather complex feeling, composed of admiration, unbounded confidence, uneasiness at times, fear and almost terror, but also love: he was convinced of that. His companion in adventures which she shared with a good fellowship that excluded any awkwardness between them, she had suddenly taken fright; and a sort of modesty, mingled with a certain coquetry, was impelling her to hold back.

That very evening, Sunday, Rénine took the train.

And, at break of day, after covering by diligence, on a road white with snow, the five miles between the little town of Pompignat, where he alighted, and the village of Bassicourt, he learnt that his journey might prove of some use: three shots had been heard during the night in the direction of the Manoir-au-Puits.

"Three shots, sergeant. I heard them as plainly as I see you standing before me," said a peasant whom the gendarmes were questioning in the parlor of the inn which Rénine had entered.

"So did I," said the waiter. "Three shots. It may have been twelve o'clock at night. The snow, which had been falling since nine, had stopped . . . and the shots sounded across the fields, one after the other: bang, bang, bang."

Five more peasants gave their evidence. The sergeant and his men had heard nothing, because the police-station backed on the fields. But a farm-laborer and a woman arrived, who said that they were in Mathias de Gorne's service, that they had been away for two days because of the intervening Sunday and that they had come straight from the manor-house, where they were unable to obtain admission:

"The gate of the grounds is locked, sergeant," said the man. "It's the first time I've known this to happen. M. Mathias comes out to open it himself, every morning at the stroke of six, winter and summer. Well, it's past eight now. I called and shouted. Nobody answered. So we came on here."

"You might have inquired at old M. de Gorne's," said the sergeant. "He lives on the high-road."

"On my word, so I might! I never thought of that."

"We'd better go there now," the sergeant decided. Two of his men went with him, as well as the peasants and a locksmith whose services were called into requisition. Rénine joined the party.

Soon, at the end of the village, they reached old de Gorne's farmyard, which Rénine recognized by Hortense's description of its position.

The old fellow was harnessing his horse and trap. When they told him what had happened, he burst out laughing:

"Three shots? Bang, bang, bang? Why, my dear sergeant, there are only two barrels to Mathias' gun!"

"What about the locked gate?"

"It means that the lad's asleep, that's all. Last night, he

came and cracked a bottle with me . . . perhaps two . . . or even three; and he'll be sleeping it off, I expect . . . he and Natalie."

He climbed on to the box of his trap—an old cart with a patched tilt—and cracked his whip:

"Good-by, gentlemen all. Those three shots of yours won't stop me from going to market at Pompignat, as I do every Monday. I've a couple of calves under the tilt; and they're just fit for the butcher. Good-day, to you!"

The others walked on. Rénine went up to the sergeant and gave him his name:

"I'm a friend of Mlle. Ermelin, of La Roncière; and, as it's too early to call on her yet, I shall be glad if you'll allow me to go round by the manor with you. Mlle. Ermelin knows Madame de Gorne; and it will be a satisfaction to me to relieve her mind, for there's nothing wrong at the manor-house, I hope?"

"If there is," replied the sergeant, "we shall read all about it as plainly as on a map, because of the snow."

He was a likable young man and seemed smart and intelligent. From the very first he had shown great acuteness in observing the tracks which Mathias had left behind him, the evening before, on returning home, tracks which soon became confused with the footprints made in going and coming by the farm-laborer and the woman. Meanwhile they came to the walls of a property of which the locksmith readily opened the gate.

From here onward, a single trail appeared upon the spotless snow, that of Mathias; and it was easy to perceive that the son must have shared largely in the father's libations, as the line of footprints described sudden curves which made it swerve right up to the trees of the avenue.

Two hundred yards farther stood the dilapidated two-storeyed building of the Manoir-au-Puits. The principal door was open.

"Let's go in," said the sergeant.

And, the moment he had crossed the threshold, he muttered:

"Oho! Old de Gorne made a mistake in not coming. They've been fighting in here."

The big room was in disorder. Two shattered chairs, the overturned table and much broken glass and china bore witness to the violence of the struggle. The tall clock, lying on the ground, had stopped at twenty past eleven.

With the farm-girl showing them the way, they ran up to the first floor. Neither Mathias nor his wife was there. But the

door of their bedroom had been broken down with a hammer which they discovered under the bed.

Rénine and the sergeant went downstairs again. The living-room had a passage communicating with the kitchen, which lay at the back of the house and opened on a small yard fenced off from the orchard. At the end of this enclosure was a well near which one was bound to pass.

Now, from the door of the kitchen to the well, the snow, which was not very thick, had been pressed down to this side and that, as though a body had been dragged over it. And all around the well were tangled traces of tramping feet, showing that the struggle must have been resumed at this spot. The sergeant again discovered Mathias' footprints, together with others which were shapelier and lighter.

These latter went straight into the orchard, by themselves. And, thirty yards on, near the footprints, a revolver was picked up and recognized by one of the peasants as resembling that which Jérôme Vignal had produced in the inn two days before.

The sergeant examined the cylinder. Three of the seven bullets had been fired.

And so the tragedy was little by little reconstructed in its main outlines; and the sergeant, who had ordered everybody to stand aside and not to step on the site of the footprints, came back to the well, leant over, put a few questions to the farm-girl and, going up to Rénine, whispered:

"It all seems fairly clear to me."

Rénine took his arm:

"Let's speak out plainly, sergeant. I understand the business pretty well, for, as I told you, I know Mlle. Ermelin, who is a friend of Jérôme Vignal's and also knows Madame de Gorne. Do you suppose . . . ?"

"I don't want to suppose anything. I simply declare that some one came there last night . . ."

"By which way? The only tracks of a person coming towards the manor are those of M. de Gorne."

"That's because the other person arrived before the snowfall, that is to say, before nine o'clock."

"Then he must have hidden in a corner of the living-room and waited for the return of M. de Gorne, who came after the snow?"

"Just so. As soon as Mathias came in, the man went for him. There was a fight. Mathias made his escape through the

kitchen. The man ran after him to the well and fired three revolver-shots."

"And where's the body?"

"Down the well."

Rénine protested:

"Oh, I say! Aren't you taking a lot for granted?"

"Why, sir, the snow's there, to tell the story; and the snow plainly says that, after the struggle, after the three shots, one man alone walked away and left the farm, one man only, and his footprints are not those of Mathias de Gorne. Then where can Mathias de Gorne be?"

"But the well . . . can be dragged?"

"No. The well is practically bottomless. It is known all over the district and gives its name to the manor."

"So you really believe . . . ?"

"I repeat what I said. Before the snowfall, a single arrival, Mathias, and a single departure, the stranger."

"And Madame de Gorne? Was she too killed and thrown down the well like her husband?"

"No, carried off."

"Carried off?"

"Remember that her bedroom was broken down with a hammer."

"Come, come, sergeant! You yourself declare that there was only one departure, the stranger's."

"Stoop down. Look at the man's footprints. See how they sink into the snow, until they actually touch the ground. Those are the footprints of a man laden with a heavy burden. The stranger was carrying Madame de Gorne on his shoulder."

"Then there's an outlet this way?"

"Yes, a little door of which Mathias de Gorne always had the key on him. The man must have taken it from him."

"A way out into the open fields?"

"Yes, a road which joins the departmental highway three quarters of a mile from here. . . . And do you know where?"

"Where?"

"At the corner of the château."

"Jérôme Vignal's château?"

"By Jove, this is beginning to look serious! If the trail leads to the château and stops there, we shall know where we stand."

The trail did continue to the château, as they were able to perceive after following it across the undulating fields, on which

the snow lay heaped in places. The approach to the main gates had been swept, but they saw that another trail, formed by the two wheels of the vehicle, was running in the opposite direction to the village.

The sergeant rang the bell. The porter, who had also been sweeping the drive, came to the gates, with a broom in his hand. In answer to a question, the man said that M. Vignal had gone away that morning before anyone else was up and that he himself had harnessed the horse to the trap.

"In that case," said Rénine, when they had moved away, "all we have to do is to follow the tracks of the wheels."

"That will be no use," said the sergeant. "They have taken the railway."

"At Pompignat station, where I came from? But they would have passed through the village."

"They have gone just the other way, because it leads to the town, where the express trains stop. The procurator-general has an office in the town. I'll telephone; and, as there's no train before eleven o'clock, all that they need do is to keep a watch at the station."

"I think you're doing the right thing, sergeant," said Rénine, "and I congratulate you on the way in which you have carried out your investigation."

They parted. Rénine went back to the inn in the village and sent a note to Hortense Daniel by hand:

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

"I seemed to gather from your letter that, touched as always by anything that concerns the heart, you were anxious to protect the love-affair of Jérôme and Natalie. Now there is every reason to suppose that these two, without consulting their fair protectress, have run away, after throwing Mathias de Gorne down a well.

"Forgive me for not coming to see you. The whole thing is extremely obscure; and, if I were with you, I should not have the detachment of mind which is needed to think the case over."

It was then half-past ten. Rénine went for a walk into the country, with his hands clasped behind his back and without vouchsafing a glance at the exquisite spectacle of the white mead-

ows. He came back for lunch, still absorbed in his thoughts and indifferent to the talk of the customers of the inn, who on all sides were discussing recent events.

He went up to his room and had been asleep some time when he was awakened by a tapping at the door. He got up and opened it:

"Is it you? . . . Is it you?" he whispered.

Hortense and he stood gazing at each other for some seconds in silence, holding each other's hands, as though nothing, no irrelevant thought and no utterance, must be allowed to interfere with the joy of their meeting. Then he asked:

"Was I right in coming?"

"Yes," she said, gently, "I expected you."

"Perhaps it would have been better if you had sent for me sooner, instead of waiting. . . . Events did not wait, you see, and I don't quite know what's to become of Jérôme Vignal and Natalie de Gorne."

"What, haven't you heard?" she said, quickly. "They've been arrested. They were going to travel by the express."

"Arrested? No." Rénine objected. "People are not arrested like that. They have to be questioned first."

"That's what's being done now. The authorities are making a search."

"Where?"

"At the château. And, as they are innocent . . . For they are innocent, aren't they? You don't admit that they are guilty, any more than I do?"

He replied:

"I admit nothing, I can admit nothing, my dear. Nevertheless, I am bound to say that everything is against them . . . except one fact, which is that everything is too much against them. It is not normal for so many proofs to be heaped up one on top of the other and for the man who commits a murder to tell his story so frankly. Apart from this, there's nothing but mystery and discrepancy."

"Well?"

"Well, I am greatly puzzled."

"But you have a plan?"

"None at all, so far. Ah, if I could see him, Jérôme Vignal, and her, Natalie de Gorne, and hear them and know what they are saying in their own defense! But you can understand that I sha'n't be permitted either to ask them any questions or to be

present at their examination. Besides, it must be finished by this time."

"It's finished at the château," she said, "but it's going to be continued at the manor-house."

"Are they taking them to the manor-house?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes . . . at least, judging by what was said to the chauffeur of one of the procurator's two cars."

"Oh, in that case," exclaimed Rénine, "the thing's done! The manor-house! Why, we shall be in the front row of the stalls! We shall see and hear everything; and, as a word, a tone of the voice, a quiver of the eyelids will be enough to give me the tiny clue I need, we may entertain some hope. Come along."

He took her by the direct route which he had followed that morning, leading to the gate which the locksmith had opened. The gendarmes on duty at the manor-house had made a passage through the snow, besides the line of footprints and around the house. Chance enabled Rénine and Hortense to approach unseen and through a side-window to enter a corridor near a back-staircase. A few steps up was a little chamber which received its only light through a sort of bull's-eye, from the large room on the ground-floor. Rénine, during the morning visit, had noticed the bull's-eye, which was covered on the inside with a piece of cloth. He removed the cloth and cut out one of the panes.

A few minutes later, a sound of voices rose from the other side of the house, no doubt near the well. The sound grew more distinct. A number of people flocked into the house. Some of them went upstairs to the first floor, while the sergeant arrived with a young man of whom Rénine and Hortense were able to distinguish only the tall figure:

"Jérôme Vignal," said she.

"Yes," said Rénine. "They are examining Madame de Gorne first, upstairs, in her bedroom."

A quarter of an hour passed. Then the persons on the first floor came downstairs and went in. They were the procurator's deputy, his clerk, a commissary of police and two detectives.

Madame de Gorne was shown in and the deputy asked Jérôme Vignal to step forward.

Jérôme Vignal's face was certainly that of the strong man whom Hortense had depicted in her letter. He displayed no un-

easiness, but rather decision and a resolute will. Natalie, who was short and very slight, with a feverish light in her eyes, nevertheless produced the same impression of quiet confidence.

The deputy, who was examining the disordered furniture and the traces of the struggle, invited her to sit down and said to Jérôme:

"Monsieur, I have not asked you many questions so far. This is a summary enquiry which I am conducting in your presence and which will be continued later by the examining-magistrate; and I wished above all to explain to you the very serious reasons for which I asked you to interrupt your journey and to come back here with Madame de Gorne. You are now in a position to refute the truly distressing charges that are hanging over you. I therefore ask you to tell me the exact truth."

"Mr. Deputy," replied Jérôme, "the charges in question trouble me very little. The truth for which you are asking will defeat all the lies which chance has accumulated against me. It is this."

He reflected for an instant and then, in clear, frank tones, said:

"I love Madame de Gorne. The first time I met her, I conceived the greatest sympathy and admiration for her. But my affection had always been directed by the sole thought of her happiness. I love her, but I respect her even more. Madame de Gorne must have told you and I tell you again that she and I exchanged our first few words last night."

He continued in a lower voice:

"I respect her the more inasmuch as she is exceedingly unhappy. All the world knows that every minute of her life was a martyrdom. Her husband persecuted her with ferocious hatred and frantic jealousy. Ask the servants. They will tell you of the long suffering of Natalie de Gorne, of the blows which she received and the insults which she had to endure. I tried to stop this torture by restoring to the rights of appeal which the merest stranger may claim when unhappiness and injustice pass a certain limit. I went three times to old de Gorne and begged him to interfere; but I found in him an almost equal hatred towards his daughter-in-law, the hatred which many people feel for anything beautiful and noble. At last I resolved on direct action and last night I took a step with regard to Mathias de Gorne which was . . . a little unusual, I admit, but which

seemed likely to succeed, considering the man's character. I swear, Mr. Deputy, that I had no other intention than to talk to Mathias de Gorne. Knowing certain particulars of his life which enabled me to bring effective pressure to bear upon him, I wished to make use of this advantage in order to achieve my purpose. If things turned out differently, I am not wholly to blame. . . . So I went there a little before nine o'clock. The servants, I knew, were out. He opened the door himself. He was alone."

"Monsieur," said the deputy, interrupting him, "you are saying something—as Madame de Gorne, for that matter, did just now—which is manifestly opposed to the truth. Mathias de Gorne did not come home last night until eleven o'clock. We have two definite proofs of this: his father's evidence and the prints of his feet in the snow, which fell from a quarter past nine o'clock to eleven."

"Mr. Deputy," Jérôme Vignal declared, without heeding the bad effect which his obstinacy was producing, "I am relating things as they were and not as they may be interpreted. But to continue. That clock marked ten minutes to nine when I entered this room. M. de Gorne, believing that he was about to be attacked, had taken down his gun. I placed my revolver on the table, out of reach of my hand, and sat down: 'I want to speak to you, monsieur,' I said. 'Please listen to me.' He did not stir and did not utter a single syllable. So I spoke. And straightway, crudely, without any previous explanations which might have softened the bluntness of my proposal, I spoke the few words which I had prepared beforehand: 'I have spent some months, monsieur,' I said, 'in making careful enquiries into your financial position. You have mortgaged every foot of your land. You have signed bills which will shortly be falling due and which it will be absolutely impossible for you to honor. You have nothing to hope for from your father, whose own affairs are in a very bad condition. So you are ruined. I have come to save you.' . . . He watched me, still without speaking, and sat down, which I took to mean that my suggestion was not entirely displeasing. Then I took a sheaf of bank-notes from my pocket, placed it before him and continued: 'Here is sixty thousand francs, monsieur. I will buy the Manoir-au-Puits, its lands and dependencies and take over the mortgages. The sum named is exactly twice what they are worth.' . . . I saw his eyes glittering. He asked my conditions. 'Only one' I said, 'that you go to America.' . . . Mr. Deputy, we sat discussing for two hours.

It was not that my offer roused his indignation—I should not have risked it if I had not known with whom I was dealing—but he wanted more and haggled greedily, though he refrained from mentioning the name of Madame de Gorne, to whom I myself had not once alluded. We might have been two men engaged in a dispute and seeking an agreement on common ground, whereas it was the happiness and the whole destiny of a woman that were at stake. At last, weary of the discussion, I accepted a compromise and we came to terms, which I resolved to make definite then and there. Two letters were exchanged between us: one in which he made the Manoir-au-Puits over to me for the sum which I had paid him; and one, which he pocketed immediately, by which I was to send him as much more in America on the day on which the decree of divorce was pronounced. . . . So the affair was settled. I am sure that at that moment he was accepting in good faith. He looked upon me less as an enemy and a rival than as a man who was doing him a service. He even went so far as to give me the key of the little door which opens on the fields, so that I might go home by the short cut. Unfortunately, while I was picking up my cap and great-coat, I made the mistake of leaving on the table the letter of sale which he had signed. In a moment, Mathias de Gorne had seen the advantage which he could take of my slip: he could keep his property, keep his wife . . . and keep the money. Quick as lightning, he tucked away the paper, hit me over the head with the butt-end of his gun, threw the gun on the floor and seized me by the throat with both hands. He had reckoned without his host. I was the stronger of the two; and after a sharp but short struggle, I mastered him and tied him up with a cord which I found lying in a corner. . . . Mr. Deputy, if my enemy's resolve was sudden, mine was no less so. Since, when all was said, he had accepted the bargain, I would force him to keep it, at least in so far as I was interested. A very few steps brought me to the first floor. . . . I had not a doubt that Madame de Gorne was there and had heard the sound of our discussion. Switching on the light of my pocket-torch, I looked into three bedrooms. The fourth was locked. I knocked at the door. There was no reply. But this was one of the moments in which a man allows no obstacle to stand in his way. I had seen a hammer in one of the rooms. I picked it up and smashed in the door. . . . Yes, Natalie was lying there, on the floor, in a dead faint. I took her in my arms, carried her downstairs and went through the kitchen. On seeing

the snow outside, I at once realized that my footprints would be easily traced. But what did it matter? Was there any reason why I should put Mathias de Gorne off the scent? Not at all. With the sixty thousand francs in his possession, as well as the paper in which I undertook to pay him a like sum on the day of his divorce, to say nothing of his house and land, he would go away, leaving Natalie de Gorne to me. Nothing was changed between us, except one thing: instead of awaiting his good pleasure, I had at once seized the precious pledge which I coveted. What I feared, therefore, was not so much any subsequent attack on the part of Mathias de Gorne, but rather the indignant reproaches of his wife. What would she say when she realized that she was a prisoner in my hands? . . . The reasons why I escaped reproach Madame de Gorne has, I believe, had the frankness to tell you. Love calls forth love. That night, in my house, broken by emotion, she confessed her feeling for me. She loved me as I loved her. Our destinies were henceforth mingled. She and I set out at five o'clock this morning . . . not foreseeing for an instant that we were amenable to the law."

Jérôme Vignal's story was finished. He had told it straight off the reel, like a story learnt by heart and incapable of revision in any detail.

There was a brief pause, during which Hortense whispered:

"It all sounds quite possible and, in any case, very logical."

"There are the objections to come," said Rénine. "Wait till you hear them. They are very serious. There's one in particular . . ."

The deputy-procurator stated it at once:

"And what became of M. de Gorne in all this?"

"Mathias de Gorne?" asked Jérôme.

"Yes. You have related, with an accent of great sincerity, a series of facts which I am quite willing to admit. Unfortunately, you have forgotten a point of the first importance: what became of Mathias de Gorne? You tied him up here, in this room. Well, this morning he was gone."

"Of course, Mr. Deputy, Mathias de Gorne accepted the bargain in the end and went away."

"By what road?"

"No doubt by the road that leads to his father's house."

"Where are his footprints? The expanse of snow is an impartial witness. After your fight with him, we see *you,* on the snow, moving away. Why don't we see *him?* He came and

did not go away again. Where is he? There is not a trace of him . . . or rather . . ."

The deputy lowered his voice:

"Or rather, yes, there are some traces on the way to the well and around the well . . . traces which prove that the last struggle of all took place there. . . . And after that there is nothing . . . not a thing. . . ."

Jérôme shrugged his shoulders:

"You have already mentioned this, Mr. Deputy, and it implies a charge of homicide against me. I have nothing to say to it."

"Have you anything to say to the fact that your revolver was picked up within fifteen yards of the well?"

"No."

"Or to the strange coincidence between the three shots heard in the night and the three cartridges missing from your revolver?"

"No, Mr. Deputy, there was not, as you believe, a last struggle by the well, because I left M. de Gorne tied up, in this room, and because I also left my revolver here. On the other hand, if shots were heard, they were not fired by me."

"A casual coincidence, therefore?"

"That's a matter for the police to explain. My only duty is to tell the truth, and you are not entitled to ask more of me."

"And if that truth conflicts with the facts observed?"

"It means that the facts are wrong, Mr. Deputy."

"As you please. But, until the day when the police are able to make them agree with your statements, you will understand that I am obliged to keep you under arrest."

"And Madame de Gorne?" asked Jérôme, greatly distressed.

The deputy did not reply. He exchanged a few words with the commissary of police and then, beckoning to a detective, ordered him to bring up one of the two motor-cars. Then he turned to Natalie:

"Madame, you have heard M. Vignal's evidence. It agrees word for word with your own. M. Vignal declares in particular that you had fainted when he carried you away. But did you remain unconscious all the way?"

It seemed as though Jérôme's composure had increased Madame de Gorne's assurance. She replied:

"I did not come to, monsieur, until I was at the château."

"It's most extraordinary. Didn't you hear the three shots which were heard by almost every one in the village?"

"I did not."

"And did you see nothing of what happened beside the well?"

"Nothing did happen. M. Vignal has told you so."

"Then what has become of your husband?"

"I don't know."

"Come, madame, you really must assist the officers of the law and at least tell us what you think. Do you believe that there may have been an accident and that possibly M. de Gorne, who had been to see his father and had more to drink than usual, lost his balance and fell into the well?"

"When my husband came back from seeing his father, he was not in the least intoxicated."

"His father, however, has stated that he was. His father and he had drunk two or three bottles of wine."

"His father is not telling the truth."

"But the snow tells the truth, madame," said the deputy, irritably. "And the line of his footprints wavers from side to side."

"My husband came in at half-past-eight, monsieur, before the snow had begun to fall."

The deputy struck the table with his fist:

"But, really, madame, you're going right against the evidence! . . . That sheet of snow cannot speak false! . . . I may accept your denial of matters that cannot be verified. But these footprints in the snow . . . in the snow . . ."

He controlled himself.

The motor-car drew up outside the windows. Forming a sudden resolve, he said to Natalie:

"You will be good enough to hold yourself at the disposal of the authorities, madame, and to remain here, in the manor-house. . . ."

And he made a sign to the sergeant to remove Jérôme Vignal in the car.

The game was lost for the two lovers. Barely united, they had to separate and to fight, far away from each other, against the most grievous accusations.

Jérôme took a step towards Natalie. They exchanged a long, sorrowful look. Then he bowed to her and walked to the door, in the wake of the sergeant of gendarmes.

"Halt!" cried a voice. "Sergeant, right about . . . turn! . . . Jérôme Vignal, stay where you are!"

The ruffled deputy raised his head, as did the other people present. The voice came from the ceiling. The bull's-eye window had opened and Rénine, leaning through it, was waving his arms:

"I wish to be heard! . . . I have several remarks to make . . . especially in respect of the zigzag footprints! . . . It all lies in that! . . . Mathias had not been drinking! . . ."

He had turned round and put his two legs through the opening, saying to Hortense, who tried to prevent him:

"Don't move. . . . No one will disturb you."

And, releasing his hold, he dropped into the room.

The deputy appeared dumfounded:

"But, really, monsieur, who are you? Where do you come from?"

Rénine brushed the dust from his clothes and replied:

"Excuse me, Mr. Deputy. I ought to have come the same way as everybody else. But I was in a hurry. Besides, if I had come in by the door instead of falling from the ceiling, my words would not have made the same impression."

The infuriated deputy advanced to meet him:

"Who are you?"

"Prince Rénine. I was with the sergeant this morning when he was pursuing his investigations, wasn't I, sergeant? Since then I have been hunting about for information. That's why, wishing to be present at the hearing, I found a corner in a little private room. . . ."

"You were there? You had the audacity? . . ."

"One must needs be audacious, when the truth's at stake. If I had not been there, I should not have discovered just the one little clue which I missed. I should not have known that Mathias de Gorne was not the least bit drunk. Now that's the key to the riddle. When we know that, we know the solution."

The deputy found himself in a rather ridiculous position. Since he had failed to take the necessary precautions to ensure the secrecy of his enquiry, it was difficult for him to take any steps against this interloper. He growled:

"Let's have done with this. What are you asking?"

"A few minutes of your kind attention."

"And with what object?"

"To establish the innocence of M. Vignal and Madame de Gorne."

He was wearing that calm air, that sort of indifferent look which was peculiar to him in moments of actions when the crisis of the drama depended solely upon himself. Hortense felt a thrill pass through her and at once became full of confidence:

"They're saved," she thought, with sudden emotion. "I asked him to protect that young creature; and he is saving her from prison and despair."

Jérôme and Natalie must have experienced the same impression of sudden hope, for they had drawn nearer to each other, as though this stranger, descended from the clouds, had already given them the right to clasp hands.

The deputy shrugged his shoulders:

"The prosecution will have every means, when the time comes, of establishing their innocence for itself. You will be called."

"It would be better to establish it here and now. Any delay might lead to grievous consequences."

"I happen to be in a hurry."

"Two or three minutes will do."

"Two or three minutes to explain a case like this!"

"No longer, I assure you."

"Are you as certain of it as all that?"

"I am now. I have been thinking hard since this morning."

The deputy realized that this was one of those gentry who stick to you like a leech and that there was nothing for it but to submit. In a rather bantering tone, he asked:

"Does your thinking enable you to tell us the exact spot where M. Mathias de Gorne is at this moment?"

Rénine took out his watch and answered:

"In Paris, Mr. Deputy."

"In Paris? Alive then?"

"Alive and, what is more, in the pink of health."

"I am delighted to hear it. But then what's the meaning of the footprints around the well and the presence of that revolver and those three shots?"

"Simply camouflage."

"Oh, really? Camouflage contrived by whom?"

"By Mathias de Gorne himself."

"That's curious! And with what object?"

"With the object of passing himself off for dead and of arranging subsequent matters in such a way that M. Vignal was bound to be accused of the death, the murder."

"An ingenious theory," the deputy agreed, still in a satirical tone. "What do you think of it, M. Vignal?"

"It is a theory which flashed through my own mind, Mr. Deputy," replied Jérôme. "It is quite likely that, after our struggle and after I had gone, Mathias de Gorne conceived a new plan by which, this time, his hatred would be fully gratified. He both loved and detested his wife. He held me in the greatest loathing. This must be his revenge."

"His revenge would cost him dear, considering that, according to your statement, Mathias de Gorne was to receive a second sum of sixty thousand francs from you."

"He would receive that sum in another quarter, Mr. Deputy. My examination of the financial position of the de Gorne family revealed to me the fact that the father and son had taken out a life-insurance policy in each other's favor. With the son dead, or passing for dead, the father would receive the insurance-money and indemnify his son."

"You mean to say," asked the deputy, with a smile, "that in all this camouflage, as you call it, M. de Gorne the elder would act as his son's accomplice?"

Rénine took up the challenge:

"Just so, Mr. Deputy. The father and son are accomplices.

"Then we shall find the son at the father's?"

"You would have found him there last night."

"What became of him?"

"He took the train at Pompignat."

"That's a mere supposition."

"No, a certainty."

"A moral certainty, perhaps, but you'll admit there's not the slightest proof."

The deputy did not wait for a reply. He considered that he had displayed an excessive good-will and that patience has its limits and he put an end to the interview:

"Not the slightest proof," he repeated, taking up his hat.

"And, above all, . . . above all, there's nothing in what you've said that can contradict in the very least the evidence of that relentless witness, the snow. To go to his father, Mathias de Gorne must have left this house. Which way did he go?"

"Hang it all, M. Vignal told you: by the road which leads from here to his father's!"

"There are no tracks in the snow."

"Yes, there are."

"But they show him coming here and not going away from here."

"It's the same thing."

"What?"

"Of course it is. There's more than one way of walking. One doesn't always go ahead by following one's nose."

"In what other way can one go ahead?"

"By walking backwards, Mr. Deputy."

These few words, spoken very simply, but in a clear tone which gave full value to every syllable, produced a profound silence. Those present at once grasped their extreme significance and, by adapting it to the actual happenings, perceived in a flash the impenetrable truth, which suddenly appeared to be the most natural thing in the world.

Rénine continued his argument. Stepping backwards in the direction of the window, he said:

"If I want to get to that window, I can of course walk straight up to it; but I can just as easily turn my back to it and walk that way. In either case I reach my goal."

And he at once proceeded in a vigorous tone:

"Here's the gist of it all. At half-past eight, before the snow fell, M. de Gorne comes home from his father's house. M. Vignal arrives twenty minutes later. There is a long discussion and a struggle, taking up three hours in all. It is then, after M. Vignal has carried off Madame de Gorne and made his escape, that Mathias de Gorne, foaming at the mouth, wild with rage, but suddenly seeing his chance of taking the most terrible revenge, hits upon the ingenious idea of using against his enemy the very snowfall upon whose evidence you are now relying. He therefore plans his own murder, or rather the appearance of his murder and of his fall to the bottom of the well and makes off backwards, step by step, thus recording his arrival instead of his departure on the white page."

The deputy sneered no longer. This eccentric intruder suddenly appeared to him in the light of a person worthy of attention, whom it would not do to make fun of. He asked:

"And how could he have left his father's house?"

"In a trap, quite simply."

"Who drove it?"

"The father. This morning the sergeant and I saw the trap and spoke to the father, who was going to market as usual. The son was hidden under the tilt. He took the train at Pompignat and is in Paris by now."

Rénine's explanation, as promised, had taken hardly five minutes. He had based it solely on logic and the probabilities of the case. And yet not a jot was left of the distressing mystery in which they were floundering. The darkness was dispelled. The whole truth appeared.

Madame de Gorne wept for joy and Jérôme Vignal thanked the good genius who was changing the course of events with a stroke of his magic wand.

"Shall we examine those footprints together, Mr. Deputy?" asked Rénine. "Do you mind? The mistake which the sergeant and I made this morning was to investigate only the footprints left by the alleged murderer and to neglect Mathias de Gorne's. Why indeed should they have attracted our attention? Yet it was precisely there that the crux of the whole affair was to be found."

They stepped into the orchard and went to the well. It did not need a long examination to observe that many of the footprints were awkward, hesitating, too deeply sunk at the heel and toe and differing from one another in the angle at which the feet were turned.

"This clumsiness was unavoidable," said Rénine. "Mathias de Gorne would have needed a regular apprenticeship before his backward progress could have equaled his ordinary gait; and both his father and he must have been aware of this, at least as regards the zigzags which you see here since old de Gorne went out of his way to tell the sergeant that his son had had too much drink." And he added, "Indeed it was the detection of this falsehood that suddenly enlightened me. When Madame de Gorne stated that her husband was not drunk, I thought of the footprints and guessed the truth."

The deputy frankly accepted his part in the matter and began to laugh:

"There's nothing left for it but to send detectives after the bogus corpse."

"On what grounds, Mr. Deputy?" asked Rénine. "Mathias de Gorne has committed no offense against the law. There's nothing criminal in trampling the soil around a well, in shift-

ing the position of a revolver that doesn't belong to you, in firing three shots or in walking backwards to one's father's house. What can we ask of him? The sixty thousand francs? I presume that this is not M. Vignal's intention and that he does not mean to bring a charge against him?"

"Certainly not," said Jérôme.

"Well, what then? The insurance-policy in favor of the survivor? But there would be no misdemeanor unless the father claimed payment. And I should be greatly surprised if he did. . . . Hullo, here the old chap is! You'll soon know all about it."

Old de Gorne was coming along, gesticulating as he walked. His easy-going features were screwed up to express sorrow and anger.

"Where's my son?" he cried. "It seems the brute's killed him! . . . My poor Mathias dead! Oh, that scoundrel of a Vignal!"

And he shook his fist at Jérôme.

The deputy said, bluntly:

"A word with you, M. de Gorne. Do you intend to claim your rights under a certain insurance-policy?"

"Well, what do *you* think?" said the old man, off his guard.

"The fact is . . . your son's not dead. People are even saying that you were a partner in his little schemes and that you stuffed him under the tilt of your trap and drove him to the station."

The old fellow spat on the ground, stretched out his hand as though he were going to take a solemn oath, stood for an instant without moving and then, suddenly, changing his mind and his tactics with ingenuous cynicism, he relaxed his features, assumed a conciliatory attitude and burst out laughing:

"That blackguard Mathias! So he tried to pass himself off as dead? What a rascal! And he reckoned on me to collect the insurance-money and send it to him? As if I should be capable of such a low, dirty trick! . . . You don't know me, my boy!"

And, without waiting for more, shaking with merriment like a jolly old fellow amused by a funny story, he took his departure, not forgetting, however, to set his great hob-nail boots on each of the compromising footprints which his son had left behind him.

THE SWEDISH MATCH

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, *one of the Russian masters of the modern short story, was born in Taganrog, on the Sea of Azov, on January 17, 1860, of liberated serfs. He attended the gymnasium of his native town, and in 1884 completed his medical studies at the University of Moscow. He practised medicine only a short time, devoting his entire energies to literature. His early writings were chiefly humorous, and were published under the pen-name of Antosha Chekonte. Some of these were gathered into a volume called "Particolored Stories," which had an immediate success. Later his writings took a more serious tone, and before many years had passed he was regarded as one of the great contemporary Russian authors. He died of tuberculosis at Badenweiler in the Black Forest on July 2, 1904, at the age of 44.*

Though Chekhov's forte was the short story—the number of his tales exceeds one hundred and fifty—he became prominent in the field of drama, his best-known plays being "The Sea Gull" (1896), "Uncle Vanya" (1899), "The Three Sisters" (1901), and "The Cherry Orchard" (1904). He has also written one full-length novel. An edition of twelve volumes of Chekhov's short stories, translated by Constance Garnett, is published by Macmillan; and Charles Scribner's Sons have published three volumes of his stories and two volumes of his plays, spelling his name Tchekhoff.

The story, "The Swedish Match," is taken from the volume, "The Cook's Wedding, and Other Stories," in the Macmillan edition.

THE SWEDISH MATCH

THE STORY OF A CRIME

By Anton Chekhov

I

On the morning of October 6, 1885, a well-dressed young man presented himself at the office of the police superintendent of the 2nd division of the S. district, and announced that his employer, a retired cornet of the guards, called Mark Ivanovitch Klyauzov, had been murdered. The young man was pale and extremely agitated as he made this announcement. His hands trembled and there was a look of horror in his eyes.

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" the superintendent asked him.

"Psyekov, Klyauzov's steward. Agricultural and engineering expert."

The police superintendent, on reaching the spot with Psyekov and the necessary witnesses, found the position as follows:

Masses of people were crowding about the lodge in which Klyauzov lived. The news of the event had flown round the neighborhood with the rapidity of lightning, and, thanks to its being a holiday, the people were flocking to the lodge from all the neighboring villages. There was a regular hubbub of talk. Pale and tearful faces were to be seen here and there. The door into Klyauzov's bedroom was found to be locked. The key was in the lock on the inside.

"Evidently the criminals made their way in by the window," Psyekov observed, as they examined the door.

They went into the garden into which the bedroom window looked. The window had a gloomy, ominous air. It was covered by a faded green curtain. One corner of the curtain was slightly turned back, which made it possible to peep into the bedroom.

"Has anyone of you looked in at the window?" enquired the superintendent.

"No, your honor," said Yefrem, the gardener, a little, gray-haired old man with the face of a veteran non-commissioned officer. "No one feels like looking when they are shaking in every limb!"

"Ech, Mark Ivanitch! Mark Ivanitch!" sighed the superintendent, as he looked at the window. "I told you that you would come to a bad end! I told you, poor dear—you wouldn't listen! Dissipation leads to no good!"

"It's thanks to Yefrem," said Psyekov. "We should never have guessed it but for him. It was he who first thought that something was wrong. He came to me this morning and said: 'Why is it our master hasn't waked up for so long? He hasn't been out of his bedroom for a whole week!' When he said that to me I was struck all of a heap. . . . The thought flashed through my mind at once. He hasn't made an appearance since Saturday of last week, and to-day's Sunday. Seven days is no joke!"

"Yes, poor man," the superintendent sighed again. "A clever fellow, well-educated, and so good-hearted. There was no one like him, one may say, in company. But a rake; the kingdom of heaven be his! I'm not surprised at anything with him! Stepan," he said, addressing one of the witnesses, "ride off this minute to my house and send Andryushka to the police captain's, let him report to him. Say Mark Ivanitch has been murdered! Yes, and run to the inspector—why should he sit in comfort doing nothing? Let him come here. And you go yourself as fast as you can to the examining magistrate, Nikolay Yermolaitch, and tell him to come here. Wait a bit, I will write him a note."

The police superintendent stationed watchmen around the lodge, and went off to the steward's to have tea. Ten minutes later he was sitting on a stool, carefully nibbling lumps of sugar, and sipping tea as hot as a red-hot coal.

"There it is! . . ." he said to Psyekov, "there it is! . . . a gentleman, and a well-to-do one, too . . . a favorite of the gods, one may say, to use Pushkin's expression, and what has he made of it? Nothing! He gave himself up to drinking and debauchery, and . . . here now . . . he has been murdered!"

Two hours later the examining magistrate drove up. Nikolay Yermolaitch Tchubikov (that was the magistrate's name),

a tall, thick-set old man of sixty, had been hard at work for a quarter of a century. He was known to the whole district as an honest, intelligent, energetic man, devoted to his work. His invariable companion, assistant, and secretary, a tall young man of six and twenty, called Dyukovsky, arrived on the scene of action with him.

"Is it possible, gentlemen?" Tchubikov began, going into Psyekov's room and rapidly shaking hands with everyone. "Is it possible? Mark Ivanitch? Murdered? No, it's impossible! Imposs-i-ble!"

"There it is," sighed the superintendent.

"Merciful heavens! Why I saw him only last Friday. At the fair at Tarabankovo! Saving your presence, I drank a glass of vodka with him!"

"There it is," the superintendent sighed once more.

They heaved sighs, expressed their horror, drank a glass of tea each, and went to the lodge.

"Make way!" the police inspector shouted to the crowd.

On going into the lodge the examining magistrate first of all set to work to inspect the door into the bedroom. The door turned out to be made of deal, painted yellow, and not to have been tampered with. No special traces that might have served as evidence could be found. They proceeded to break open the door.

"I beg you, gentlemen, who are not concerned, to retire," said the examining magistrate, when, after long banging and cracking, the door yielded to the ax and the chisel. "I ask this in the interests of the investigation. . . . Inspector, admit no one!"

Tchubikov, his assistant, and the police superintendent opened the door and hesitatingly, one after the other, walked into the room. The following spectacle met their eyes. In the solitary window stood a big wooden bedstead with an immense feather bed on it. On the rumpled feather bed lay a creased and crumpled quilt. A pillow, in a cotton pillow case—also much creased, was on the floor. On a little table beside the bed lay a silver watch, and silver coins to the value of twenty kopecks. Some sulphur matches lay there too. Except the bed, the table, and a solitary chair, there was no furniture in the room. Looking under the bed, the superintendent saw two dozen empty bottles, an old straw hat, and a jar of vodka. Under the table lay one

boot, covered with dust. Taking a look round the room, Tchubikov frowned and flushed crimson.

"The blackguards!" he muttered, clenching his fists.

"And where is Mark Ivanitch?" Dyukovsky asked quietly.

"I beg you not to put your spoke in," Tchubikov answered roughly. "Kindly examine the floor. This is the second case in my experience, Yevgraf Kuzmitch," he added to the police superintendent, dropping his voice. "In 1870 I had a similar case. But no doubt you remember it. . . . The murder of the merchant Portretov. It was just the same. The blackguards murdered him, and dragged the dead body out of the window."

Tchubikov went to the window, drew the curtain aside, and cautiously pushed the window. The window opened.

"It opens, so it was not fastened. . . . H'm . . . there are traces on the window-sill. Do you see? Here is the trace of a knee. . . . Some one climbed out. . . . We shall have to inspect the window thoroughly."

"There is nothing special to be observed on the floor," said Dyukovsky. "No stains, nor scratches. The only thing I have found is a used Swedish match. Here it is. As far as I remember, Mark Ivanitch didn't smoke; in a general way he used sulphur ones, never Swedish matches. This match may serve as a clue. . . ."

"Oh, hold your tongue, please!" cried Tchubikov, with a wave of his hand. "He keeps on about his match! I can't stand these excitable people! Instead of looking for matches, you had better examine the bed!"

On inspecting the bed, Lyukovsky reported:

"There are no stains of blood or of anything else. . . . Nor are there any fresh rents. On the pillow there are traces of teeth. A liquid, having the smell of beer and also the taste of it, has been spilt on the quilt. . . . The general appearance of the bed gives grounds for supposing there has been a struggle."

"I know there was a struggle without your telling me! No one asked you whether there was a struggle. Instead of looking out for a struggle you had better be . . ."

"One boot is here, the other one is not on the scene."

"Well, what of that?"

"Why, they must have strangled him while he was taking off his boots. He hadn't time to take the second boot off when . . ."

"He's off again! . . . And how do you know that he was strangled?"

"There are marks of teeth on the pillow. The pillow itself is very much crumpled, and has been flung to a distance of six feet from the bed."

"He argues, the chatterbox! We had better go into the garden. You had better look in the garden instead of rummaging about here. . . . I can do that without your help."

When they went out into the garden their first task was the inspection of the grass. The grass had been trampled down under the windows. The clump of burdock against the wall under the window turned out to have been trodden on too. Dyukovsky succeeded in finding on it some broken shoots, and a little bit of wadding. On the topmost burrs, some fine threads of dark blue wool were found.

"What was the color of his last suit?" Dyukovsky asked Psyekov.

"It was yellow, made of canvas."

"Capital! Then it was they who were in dark blue. . . ."

Some of the burrs were cut off and carefully wrapped up in paper. At that moment Artsybashev-Svistakovsky, the police captain, and Tyutyuev, the doctor, arrived. The police captain greeted the others, and at once proceeded to satisfy his curiosity; the doctor, a tall and extremely lean man with sunken eyes, a long nose, and a sharp chin, greeting no one and asking no questions, sat down on a stump, heaved a sigh, and said:

"The Serbians are in a turmoil again! I can't make out what they want! Ah, Austria, Austria! It's your doing!"

The inspection of the window from outside yielded absolutely no result; the inspection of the grass and surrounding bushes furnished many valuable clues. Dyukovsky succeeded, for instance, in detecting a long, dark streak in the grass, consisting of stains, and stretching from the window for a good many yards into the garden. The streak ended under one of the lilac bushes in a big, brownish stain. Under the same bush was found a boot, which turned out to be the fellow to the one found in the bedroom.

"This is an old stain of blood," said Dyukovsky, examining the stain.

At the word "blood," the doctor got up and lazily took a cursory glance at the stain.

"Yes, it's blood," he muttered.

"Then he wasn't strangled since there's blood," said Tchubikov, looking malignantly at Dyukovsky.

"He was strangled in the bedroom, and here, afraid he would come to, they stabbed him with something sharp. The stain under the bush shows that he lay there for a comparatively long time, while they were trying to find some way of carrying him, or something to carry him on out of the garden."

"Well, and the boot?"

"That boot bears out my contention that he was murdered while he was taking off his boots before going to bed. He had taken off one boot, the other, that is, this boot he had only managed to get half off. While he was being dragged and shaken the boot that was only half on came off of itself. . . ."

"What powers of deduction! Just look at him!" Tchubikov jeered. "He brings it all out so pat! And when will you learn not to put your theories forward? You had better take a little of the grass for analysis instead of arguing!"

After making the inspection and taking a plan of the locality they went off to the steward's to write a report and have lunch. At lunch they talked.

"Watch, money, and everything else . . . are untouched," Tchubikov began the conversation. "It is as clear as twice two makes four that the murder was committed not for mercenary motives."

"It was committed by a man of the educated class," Dyukovsky put in.

"From what do you draw that conclusion?"

"I base it on the Swedish match which the peasants about here have not learned to use yet. Such matches are only used by landowners and not by all of them. He was murdered, by the way, not by one but by three, at least: two held him while the third strangled him. Klyauzov was strong and the murderers must have known that."

"What use would his strength be to him, supposing he were asleep?"

"The murderers came upon him as he was taking off his boots. He was taking off his boots, so he was not asleep."

"It's no good making things up! You had better eat your lunch!"

"To my thinking, your honor," said Yefrem, the gardener, as he set the samovar on the table, "this vile deed was the work of no other than Nikolashka."

"Quite possible," said Psyekov.

"Who's this Nikolashka?"

"The master's valet, your honor," answered Yefrem. "Who else should it be if not he? He's a ruffian, your honor! A drunkard, and such a dissipated fellow! May the Queen of Heaven never bring the like again! He always used to fetch vodka for the master, he always used to put the master to bed. . . . Who should it be if not he? And what's more, I venture to bring to your notice, your honor, he boasted once in a tavern, the rascal, that he would murder his master. It's all on account of Akulka, on account of a woman. . . . He had a soldier's wife. . . . The master took a fancy to her and got intimate with her, and he . . . was angered by it, to be sure. He's lolling about in the kitchen now, drunk. He's crying . . . making out he is grieving over the matter . . ."

"And anyone might be angry over Akulka, certainly," said Psyekov. "She is a soldier's wife, a peasant woman, but . . . Mark Ivanitch might well call her Nana. There is something in her that does suggest Nana . . . fascinating . . ."

"I have seen her . . . I know . . ." said the examining magistrate, blowing his nose in a red handkerchief.

Dyukovsky blushed and dropped his eyes. The police superintendent drummed on his saucer with his fingers. The police captain coughed and rummaged in his portfolio for something. On the doctor alone the mention of Akulka and Nana appeared to produce no impression. Tchubikov ordered Nikolashka to be fetched. Nikolashka, a lanky young man with a long pock-marked nose and a hollow chest, wearing a reefer jacket that had been his master's, came into Psyekov's room and bowed down to the ground before Tchubikov. His face looked sleepy and showed traces of tears. He was drunk and could hardly stand up.

"Where is your master?" Tchubikov asked him.

"He's murdered, your honor."

As he said this Nikolashka blinked and began to cry.

"We know that he is murdered. But where is he now? Where is his body?"

"They say it was dragged out of window and buried in the garden."

"H'm . . . the results of the investigation are already known in the kitchen then. . . . That's bad. My good fellow, where

were you on the night when your master was killed? On Saturday, that is?"

Nikolashka raised his head, craned his neck, and pondered.

"I can't say, your honor," he said. "I was drunk and I don't remember."

"An alibi!" whispered Dyukovsky, grinning and rubbing his hands.

"Ah! And why is it there's blood under your master's window!"

Nikolashka flung up his head and pondered.

"Think a little quicker," said the police captain.

"In a minute. That blood's from a trifling matter, your honor. I killed a hen; I cut her throat very simply in the usual way, and she fluttered out of my hands and took and ran off. . . . That's what the blood's from."

Yefrem testified that Nikolashka really did kill a hen every evening and killed it in all sorts of places, and no one had seen the half-killed hen running about the garden, though of course it could not be positively denied that it had done so.

"An alibi," laughed Dyukovsky, "and what an idiotic alibi."

"Have you had relations with Akulka?"

"Yes, I have sinned."

"And your master carried her off from you?"

"No, not at all. It was this gentleman here, Mr. Psyekov, Ivan Mihalitch, who enticed her from me, and the master took her from Ivan Mihalitch. That's how it was."

Psyekov looked confused and began rubbing his left eye. Dyukovsky fastened his eyes upon him, detected his confusion, and started. He saw on the steward's legs dark blue trousers which he had not previously noticed. The trousers reminded him of the blue threads found on the burdock. Tchubikov in his turn glanced suspiciously at Psyekov.

"You can go!" he said to Nikolashka. "And now allow me to put one question to you, Mr. Psyekov. You were here, of course, on the Saturday of last week?"

"Yes, at ten o'clock I had supper with Mark Ivanitch."

"And afterwards?"

Psyekov was confused, and got up from the table.

"Afterwards . . . afterwards . . . I really don't remember," he muttered. "I had drunk a good deal on that occasion. . . . I can't remember where and when I went to bed. . . . Why do you all look at me like that? As though I had murdered him!"

"Where did you wake up?"

"I woke up in the servants' kitchen on the stove . . . They can all confirm that. How I got on to the stove I can't say. . . ."

"Don't disturb yourself . . . Do you know Akulina?"

"Oh well, not particularly."

"Did she leave you for Klyauzov?"

"Yes. . . . Yefrem, bring some more mushrooms! Will you have some tea, Yevgraf Kuzmitch?"

There followed an oppressive, painful silence that lasted for some five minutes. Dyukovsky held his tongue, and kept his piercing eyes on Psyekov's face, which gradually turned pale. The silence was broken by Tchubikov.

"We must go to the big house," he said, "and speak to the deceased's sister, Marya Ivanovna. She may give us some evidence."

Tchubikov and his assistant thanked Psyekov for the lunch, then went off to the big house. They found Klyauzov's sister, a maiden lady of five and forty, on her knees before a high family shrine of ikons. When she saw portfolios and caps adorned with cockades in her visitors' hands, she turned pale.

"First of all, I must offer an apology for disturbing your devotions, so to say," the gallant Tchubikov began with a scrape. "We have come to you with a request. You have heard, of course, already. . . . There is a suspicion that your brother has somehow been murdered. God's will, you know. . . . Death no one can escape, neither Tsar nor plowman. Can you not assist us with some fact, something that will throw light?"

"Oh, do not ask me!" said Marya Ivanovna, turning whiter still, and hiding her face in her hands. "I can tell you nothing! Nothing! I implore you! I can say nothing . . . What can I do? Oh, no, no . . . not a word . . . of my brother! I would rather die than speak!"

Marya Ivanovna burst into tears and went away into another room. The officials looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders, and beat a retreat.

"A devil of a woman!" said Dyukovsky, swearing as they went out of the big house. "Apparently she knows something and is concealing it. And there is something peculiar in the maid-servant's expression too. . . . You wait a bit, you devils! We will get to the bottom of it all!"

In the evening, Tchubikov and his assistant were driving

home by the light of a pale-faced moon; they sat in their waggonette, summing up in their minds the incidents of the day. Both were exhausted and sat silent. Tchubikov never liked talking on the road. In spite of his talkativeness, Dyukovsky held his tongue in deference to the old man. Towards the end of the journey, however, the young man could endure the silence no longer, and began:

"That Nikolashka has had a hand in the business," he said, "*non dubitandum est.* One can see from his mug too what sort of a chap he is. . . . His alibi gives him away hand and foot. There is no doubt either that he was not the instigator of the crime. He was only the stupid hired tool. Do you agree? The discreet Psyekov plays a not unimportant part in the affair too. His blue trousers, his embarrassment, his lying on the stove from fright after the murder, his alibi, and Akulka."

"Keep it up, you're in your glory! According to you, if a man knows Akulka he is the murderer. Ah, you hot-head! You ought to be sucking your bottle instead of investigating cases! You used to be running after Akulka too; does that mean that you had a hand in this business?"

"Akulka was a cook in your house for a month, too, but . . . I don't say anything. On that Saturday night I was playing cards with you, I saw you, or I should be after you too. The woman is not the point, my good sir. The point is the nasty, disgusting, mean feeling. . . . The discreet young man did not like to be cut out, do you see. Vanity, do you see. . . . He longed to be revenged. Then . . . His thick lips are a strong indication of sensuality. Do you remember how he smacked his lips when he compared Akulka to Nana? That he is burning with passion, the scoundrel, is beyond doubt! And so you have wounded vanity and unsatisfied passion. That's enough to lead to murder. Two of them are in our hands, but who is the third? Nikolashka and Psyekov held him. Who was it smothered him? Psyekov is timid, easily embarrassed, altogether a coward. People like Nikolashka are not equal to smothering with a pillow, they set to work with an ax or a mallet. . . . Some third person must have smothered him, but who?"

Dyukovsky pulled his cap over his eyes, and pondered. He was silent till the waggonette had driven up to the examining magistrate's house.

"Eureka!" he said, as he went into the house, and took off his overcoat. "Eureka, Nikolay Yermolaitch! I can't under-

stand how it is it didn't occur to me before. Do you know who the third is?"

"Do leave off, please! There's supper ready. Sit down to supper!"

Tchubikov and Dyukovsky sat down to supper. Dyukovsky poured himself out a wine-glassful of vodka, got up, stretched, and with sparkling eyes, said:

"Let me tell you then that the third person who collaborated with the scoundrel Psyekov and smothered him was a woman! Yes! I am speaking of the murdered man's sister, Marya Ivanovna!"

Tchubikov coughed over his vodka and fastened his eyes on Dyukovsky.

"Are you . . . not quite right? Is your head . . . not quite right? Does it ache?"

"I am quite well. Very good, suppose I have gone out of my mind, but how do you explain her confusion on our arrival? How do you explain her refusal to give information? Admitting that that is trivial—very good! All right!—but think of the terms they were on! She detested her brother! She is an Old Believer, he was a profligate, a godless fellow . . . that is what has bred hatred between them! They say he succeeded in persuading her that he was an angel of Satan! He used to practise spiritualism in her presence!"

"Well, what then?"

"Don't you understand? She's an Old Believer, she murdered him through fanaticism! She has not merely slain a wicked man, a profligate, she has freed the world from Antichrist —and that she fancies is her merit, her religious achievement! Ah, you don't know these old maids, these Old Believers! You should read Dostoevsky! And what does Lyeskov say . . . and Petchersky! It's she, it's she, I'll stake my life on it. She smothered him! Oh, the fiendish woman! Wasn't she, perhaps, standing before the ikons when we went in to put us off the scent? 'I'll stand up and say my prayers,' she said to herself, 'they will think I am calm and don't expect them.' That's the method of all novices in crime. Dear Nikolay Yermolaitch! My dear man! Do hand this case over to me! Let me go through with it to the end! My dear fellow! I have begun it, and I will carry it through to the end."

Tchubikov shook his head and frowned.

"I am equal to sifting difficult cases myself," he said. "And

it's your place not to put yourself forward. Write what is dictated to you, that is your business!"

Dyukovsky flushed crimson, walked out, and slammed the door.

"A clever fellow, the rogue," Tchubikov muttered, looking after him. "Ve-ery clever! Only inappropriately hasty. I shall have to buy him a cigar-case at the fair for a present."

Next morning a lad with a big head and a hare lip came from Klyauzovka. He gave his name as the shepherd Danilko, and furnished a very interesting piece of information.

"I had had a drop," said he. "I stayed on till midnight at my crony's. As I was going home, being drunk, I got into the river for a bathe. I was bathing and what do I see! Two men coming along the dam carrying something black. 'Tyoo!' I shouted at them. They were scared, and cut along as fast as they could go into the Makarev kitchen-gardens. Strike me dead, if it wasn't the master they were carrying!"

Towards evening of the same day Psyekov and Nikolashka were arrested and taken under guard to the district town. In the town they were put in the prison tower.

II

Twelve days passed.

It was morning. The examining magistrate, Nikolay Yermolaitch, was sitting at a green table at home, looking through the papers, relating to the "Klyauzov case"; Dyukovsky was pacing up and down the room restlessly, like a wolf in a cage.

"You are convinced of the guilt of Nikolashka and Psyekov," he said, nervously pulling at his youthful beard. "Why is it you refuse to be convinced of the guilt of Marya Ivanovna? Haven't you evidence enough?"

"I don't say that I don't believe in it. I am convinced of it, but somehow I can't believe it. . . . There is no real evidence. It's all theoretical, as it were. . . . Fanaticism and one thing and another. . . ."

"And you must have an ax and bloodstained sheets! . . . You lawyers! Well, I will prove it to you then! Do give up your slip-shod attitude to the psychological aspect of the case. Your Marya Ivanovna ought to be in Siberia! I'll prove it. If theoretical proof is not enough for you, I have something material.

. . . It will show you how right my theory is! Only let me go about a little!"

"What are you talking about?"

"The Swedish match! Have you forgotten? I haven't forgotten it! I'll find out who struck it in the murdered man's room! It was not struck by Nikolashka, nor by Psyekov, neither of whom turned out to have matches when searched, but a third person, that is Marya Ivanovna. And I will prove it! . . . Only let me drive about the district, make some enquiries. . . ."

"Oh, very well, sit down. . . . Let us proceed to the examination."

Dyukovsky sat down to the table, and thrust his long nose into the papers.

"Bring in Nikolay Tetchov!" cried the examining magistrate.

Nikolashka was brought in. He was pale and thin as a chip. He was trembling.

"Tetchov!" began Tchubikov. "In 1879 you were convicted of theft and condemned to a term of imprisonment. In 1882 you were condemned for theft a second time, and a second time sent to prison . . . We know all about it. . . ."

A look of surprise came up into Nikolashka's face. The examining magistrate's omniscience amazed him, but soon wonder was replaced by an expression of extreme distress. He broke into sobs, and asked leave to go to wash, and calm himself. He was led out.

"Bring in Psyekov!" said the examining magistrate.

Psyekov was led in. The young man's face had greatly changed during those twelve days. He was thin, pale, and wasted. There was a look of apathy in his eyes.

"Sit down, Psyekov," said Tchubikov. "I hope that to-day you will be sensible and not persist in lying as on other occasions. All this time you have denied your participation in the murder of Klyauzov, in spite of the mass of evidence against you. It is senseless. Confession is some mitigation of guilt. To-day I am talking to you for the last time. If you don't confess to-day, to-morrow it will be too late. Come, tell us. . . ."

"I know nothing, and I don't know your evidence," whispered Psyekov.

"That's useless! Well then, allow me to tell you how it happened. On Saturday evening, you were sitting in Klyauzov's bedroom drinking vodka and beer with him." (Dyukovsky riveted his eyes on Psyekov's face, and did not remove them dur-

ing the whole monologue.) "Nikolay was waiting upon you. Between twelve and one Mark Ivanitch told you he wanted to go to bed. He always did go to bed at that time. While he was taking off his boots and giving you some instructions regarding the estate, Nikolay and you at a given signal seized your intoxicated master and flung him back upon the bed. One of you sat on his feet, the other on his head. At that moment the lady, you know who, in a black dress, who had arranged with you beforehand the part she would take in the crime, came in from the passage. She picked up the pillow, and proceeded to smother him with it. During the struggle, the light went out. The woman took a box of Swedish matches out of her pocket and lighted the candle. Isn't that right? I see from your face that what I say is true. Well, to proceed. . . . Having smothered him, and being convinced that he had ceased to breathe, Nikolay and you dragged him out of window and put him down near the burdocks. Afraid that he might regain consciousness, you struck him with something sharp. Then you carried him, and laid him for some time under a lilac bush. After resting and considering a little, you carried him . . . lifted him over the hurdle. . . . Then went along the road. . . . Then comes the dam; near the dam you were frightened by a peasant. But what is the matter with you?"

Psyekov, white as a sheet, got up, staggering.

"I am suffocating!" he said. "Very well. . . . So be it. . . . Only I must go. . . . Please."

Psyekov was led out.

"At last he has admitted it!" said Tchubikov, stretching at his ease. "He has given himself away! How neatly I caught him there."

"And he didn't deny the woman in black!" said Dyukovsky, laughing. "I am awfully worried over that Swedish match, though! I can't endure it any longer. Good-by! I am going!"

Dyukovsky put on his cap and went off. Tchubikov began interrogating Akulka.

Akulka declared that she knew nothing about it. . . .

"I have lived with you and with nobody else!" she said.

At six o'clock in the evening Dyukovsky returned. He was more excited than ever. His hands trembled so much that he could not unbutton his overcoat. His cheeks were burning. It was evident that he had not come back without news.

"*Veni, vidi, vici!*" he cried, dashing into Tchubikov's room and sinking into an armchair. "I vow on my honor, I begin to believe in my own genius. Listen, damnation take us! Listen and wonder, old friend! It's comic and it's sad. You have three in your grasp already . . . haven't you? I have found a fourth murderer, or rather murderess, for it is a woman! And what a woman! I would have given ten years of my life merely to touch her shoulders. But . . . listen. I drove to Klyauzovka and proceeded to describe a spiral round it. On the way I visited all the shopkeepers and innkeepers, asking for Swedish matches. Everywhere I was told 'No.' I have been on my round up to now. Twenty times I lost hope, and as many times regained it. I have been on the go all day long, and only an hour ago came upon what I was looking for. A couple of miles from here they gave me a packet of a dozen boxes of matches. One box was missing . . . I asked at once: 'Who bought that box?' 'So-and-so. She took a fancy to them. . . . They crackle.' My dear fellow! Nikolay Yermolaitch! What can sometimes be done by a man who has been expelled from a seminary and studied Gaboriau is beyond all conception! From to-day I shall begin to respect myself! . . . Ough. . . . Well, let us go!"

"Go where?"

"To her, to the fourth. . . . We must make haste, or . . . I shall explode with impatience! Do you know who she is? You will never guess. The young wife of our old police superindendent, Yevgraf Kuzmitch, Olga Petrovna; that's who it is! She bought that box of matches!"

"You . . . you. . . . Are you out of your mind?"

"It's very natural! In the first place she smokes, and in the second she was head over ears in love with Klyauzov. He rejected her love for the sake of an Akulka. Revenge. I remember now, I once came upon them behind the screen in the kitchen. She was cursing him, while he was smoking her cigarette and puffing the smoke into her face. But do come along; make haste, for it is getting dark already. . . . Let us go!"

"I have not gone so completely crazy yet as to disturb a respectable, honorable woman at night for the sake of a wretched boy!"

"Honorable, respectable. . . . You are a rag then, not an examining magistrate! I have never ventured to abuse you, but now you force me to it! You rag! you old fogey! Come, dear Nikolay Yermolaitch, I entreat you!"

The examining magistrate waved his hand in refusal and spat in disgust.

"I beg you! I beg you, not for my own sake, but in the interests of justice! I beseech you, indeed! Do me a favor, if only for once in your life!"

Dyukovsky fell on his knees.

"Nikolay Yermolaitch, do be so good! Call me a scoundrel, a worthless wretch if I am in error about that woman! It is such a case, you know! It is a case! More like a novel than a case. The fame of it will be all over Russia. They will make you examining magistrate for particularly important cases! Do understand, you unreasonable old man!"

The examining magistrate frowned and irresolutely put out his hand towards his hat.

"Well, the devil take you!" he said, "let us go."

It was already dark when the examining magistrate's waggonette rolled up to the police superintendent's door.

"What brutes we are!" said Tchubikov, as he reached for the bell. "We are disturbing people."

"Never mind, never mind, don't be frightened. We will say that one of the springs has broken."

Tchubikov and Dyukovsky were met in the doorway by a tall, plump woman of three and twenty, with eyebrows as black as pitch and full red lips. It was Olga Petrovna herself.

"Ah, how very nice," she said, smiling all over her face. "You are just in time for supper. My Yevgraf Kuzmitch is not at home. . . . He is staying at the priest's. But we can get on without him. Sit down. Have you come from an inquiry?"

"Yes. . . . We have broken one of our springs, you know," began Tchubibov, going into the drawing-room and sitting down in an easy-chair.

"Take her by surprise at once and overwhelm her," Dyukovsky whispered to him.

"A spring . . . er . . . yes. . . . We just drove up. . . ."

"Overwhelm her, I tell you! She will guess if you go drawing it out."

"Oh, do as you like, but spare me," muttered Tchubikov, getting up and walking to the window. "I can't! You cooked the mess, you eat it!"

"Yes, the spring," Dyukovsky began, going up to the superintendent's wife and wrinkling his long nose. "We have not

come in to . . . er-er-er . . . supper, nor to see Yevgraf Kuzmitch. We have come to ask you, madam, where is Mark Ivanovitch whom you have murdered?"

"What? What Mark Ivanovitch?" faltered the superintendent's wife, and her full face was suddenly in one instant suffused with crimson. "I . . . don't understand."

"I ask you in the name of the law! Where is Klyauzov? We know all about it!"

"Through whom?" the superintendent's wife asked slowly, unable to face Dyukovsky's eyes.

"Kindly inform us where he is!"

"But how did you find out? Who told you?"

"We know all about it. I insist in the name of the law."

The examining magistrate, encouraged by the lady's confusion, went up to her.

"Tell us and we will go away. Otherwise we . . ."

"What do you want with him?"

"What is the object of such questions, madam? We ask you for information. You are trembling, confused. . . . Yes, he has been murdered, and if you will have it, murdered by you! Your accomplices have betrayed you!"

The police superintendent's wife turned pale.

"Come along," she said quietly, wringing her hands. "He is hidden in the bath-house. Only for God's sake, don't tell my husband! I implore you! It would be too much for him."

The superintendent's wife took a big key from the wall, and led her visitors through the kitchen and the passage into the yard. It was dark in the yard. There was a drizzle of fine rain. The superintendent's wife went on ahead. Tchubikov and Dyukovsky strode after her through the long grass, breathing in the smell of wild hemp and slops, which made a squelching sound under their feet. It was a big yard. Soon there were no more pools of slops, and their feet felt plowed land. In the darkness they saw the silhouette of trees, and among the trees a little house with a crooked chimney.

"This is the bath-house," said the superintendent's wife, "but I implore you, do not tell anyone."

Going up to the bath-house, Tchubikov and Dyukovsky saw a large padlock on the door.

"Get ready your candle-end and matches," Tchubikov whispered to his assistant.

The superintendent's wife unlocked the padlock and let the

visitors into the bath-house. Dyukovsky struck a match and lighted up the entry. In the middle of it stood a table. On the table, beside a podgy little samovar, was a soup tureen with some cold cabbage-soup in it, and a dish with traces of some sauce on it.

"Go on!"

They went into the next room, the bath-room. There, too, was a table. On the table there stood a big dish of ham, a bottle of vodka, plates, knives and forks.

"But where is he . . . where's the murdered man?"

"He is on the top shelf," whispered the superintendent's wife, turning paler than ever and trembling.

Dyukovsky took the candle-end in his hand and climbed up to the upper shelf. There he saw a long, human body, lying motionless on a big feather bed. The body emitted a faint snore. . . .

"They have made fools of us, damn it all!" Dyukovsky cried. "This is not he! It is some living blockhead lying here. Hi! who are you, damnation take you!"

The body drew in its breath with a whistling sound and moved. Dyukovsky prodded it with his elbow. It lifted up its arms, stretched, and raised its head.

"Who is that poking?" a hoarse, ponderous bass voice inquired. "What do you want?"

Dyukovsky held the candle-end to the face of the unknown and uttered a shriek. In the crimson nose, in the ruffled, uncombed hair, in the pitch-black mustaches of which one was jauntily twisted and pointed insolently towards the ceiling, he recognized Cornet Klyauzov.

"You. . . . Mark . . . Ivanitch! Impossible!"

The examining magistrate looked up and was dumfounded.

"It is I, yes. . . . And it's you, Dyukovsky! What the devil do you want here? And whose ugly mug is that down there? Holy Saints, it's the examining magistrate! How in the world did you come here?"

Klyauzov hurriedly got down and embraced Tchubikov. Olga Petrovna whisked out of the door.

"However did you come? Let's have a drink!—dash it all! Tra-ta-ti-to-tom. . . . Let's have a drink! Who brought you here, though? How did you get to know I was here? It doesn't matter, though! Have a drink!"

Klyauzov lighted the lamp and poured out three glasses of vodka.

"The fact is, I don't understand you," said the examining magistrate, throwing out his hands. "Is it you, or not you?"

"Stop that. . . . Do you want to give me a sermon? Don't trouble yourself! Dyukovsky boy, drink up your vodka! Friends, let us pass the . . . What are you staring at . . . ? Drink!"

"All the same, I can't understand," said the examining magistrate, mechanically drinking his vodka. "Why are you here?"

"Why shouldn't I be here, if I am comfortable here?"

Klyauzov sipped his vodka and ate some ham.

"I am staying with the superintendent's wife, as you see. In the wilds among the ruins, like some house goblin. Drink! I felt sorry for her, you know, old man! I took pity on her, and, well, I am living here in the deserted bath-house, like a hermit. . . . I am well fed. Next week I am thinking of moving on. . . . I've had enough of it. . . ."

"Inconceivable!" said Dyukovsky.

"What is there inconceivable in it?"

"Inconceivable! For God's sake, how did your boot get into the garden?"

"What boot?"

"We found one of your boots in the bedroom and the other in the garden."

"And what do you want to know that for? It is not your business. But do drink, dash it all. Since you have waked me up, you may as well drink! There's an interesting tale about that boot, my boy. I didn't want to come to Olga's. I didn't feel inclined, you know, I'd had a drop too much. . . . She came under the window and began scolding me. . . . You know how women . . . as a rule. . . . Being drunk, I up and flung my boot at her. . . . Ha-ha! . . . 'Don't scold,' I said. She clambered in at the window, lighted the lamp, and gave me a good drubbing, as I was drunk. I have plenty to eat here. . . . Love, vodka, and good things! But where are you off to? Tchubikov, where are you off to?"

The examining magistrate spat on the floor and walked out of the bath-house. Dyukovsky followed him with his head hanging. Both got into the waggonette in silence and drove off. Never had the road seemed so long and dreary. Both were silent. Tchubikov was shaking with anger all the way.

Dyukovsky hid his face in his collar as though he were afraid the darkness and the drizzling rain might read his shame on his face.

On getting home the examining magistrate found the doctor, Tyutyuev, there. The doctor was sitting at the table and heaving deep sighs as he turned over the pages of the *Neva*.

"The things that are going on in the world," he said, greeting the examining magistrate with a melancholy smile. "Austria is at it again . . . and Gladstone, too, in a way. . . ."

Tchubikov flung his hat under the table and began to tremble.

"You devil of a skeleton! Don't bother me! I've told you a thousand times over, don't bother me with your politics! It's not the time for politics! And as for you," he turned upon Dyukovsky and shook his fist at him, "as for you. . . . I'll never forget it, as long as I live!"

"But the Swedish match, you know! How could I tell? . . ."

"Choke yourself with your match! Go away and don't irritate me, or goodness knows what I shall do to you. Don't let me set eyes on you."

Dyukovsky heaved a sigh, took his hat, and went out.

"I'll go and get drunk!" he decided, as he went out of the gate, and he sauntered dejectedly towards the tavern.

When the superintendent's wife got home from the bath-house she found her husband in the drawing-room.

"What did the examining magistrate come about?" asked her husband.

"He came to say that they had found Klyauzov. Only fancy, they found him staying with another man's wife."

"Ah, Mark Ivanitch, Mark Ivanitch!" sighed the police superintendent, turning up his eyes. "I told you that dissipation would lead to no good! I told you so—you wouldn't heed me!"

WELL-WOVEN EVIDENCE

DIETRICH THEDEN *was born at Bansrade, in Hessen, on June 15, 1857. At an early age he adopted journalism as a profession, and for many years was a well-known Berlin newspaper editor. He not only wrote for the press but contributed to various fictional and literary magazines. His first book, published in 1882, was called "Im der Fremde"; and this was followed, in the same year, by "Führer durch die Jugendliteratur." In fact, for nearly ten years Theden devoted himself almost exclusively to the writing of juveniles. His works during this period include "Für 's Kind," "Lasst euch erzählen," "Jugendgrüsse," and "Im Zauber der Dichtung."*

Then came a lapse of three years, and from 1894 on he published many novels of a romantic and passional nature, such as "Im Banne der Leidenschaft," "Auf der Flucht," "Auf der Höhe," and "Fraüleinliebe." Several volumes of short stories appeared over his name, principal of which were "Neues Novellenbuch" and "Das lange Wunder." His first detective novel—"Der Advokatenbauer"—appeared in 1899; and other volumes of a similar nature were published regularly until his death—"Im Zick-Zack" (1899), "Ein Verteidiger" (1900), "Herzgold" (1901), and "Die zweite Busse" (1903). Theden died in Berlin in 1903.

The story appearing herewith in English translation ("Fein gesponnene Fäden") is one of the many mystery-detective tales Theden wrote during the later years of his life.

WELL-WOVEN EVIDENCE

(Fein gesponnene Fäden)

By Dietrich Theden

Dear Friend: It is but a few weeks since I had the pleasure of meeting you again in the house of your brother, and of realizing that I have still the honor of your friendship. At our last meeting we could spend our time in the pleasure of renewing the memories of our youth and of calling up for ourselves equally pleasant hopes for the future. I come in a different matter to-day; in deep distress of mind, and turn to you, not only as friend, but as chief of police. As my friend I would like to go into the matter more with personal detail, but as I come to you officially to-day, I will limit myself to a short, concise report, and to the request that you may send me a well-tried and capable criminal official to give me his aid in this unfortunate affair. The matter is as follows:

On Sunday, the 18th of June, the safe in my business office was robbed of the sum of 58,000 marks. As you know, we live here in a small town, and it is not possible for us to take the day's cash to the bank every evening. We are therefore compelled to care for it ourselves for several days. It has always been my practise, however, to avoid allowing more cash to accumulate than we needed for the week's work; ten, or, at the most, fifteen thousand marks were usually all that we had in our safe. This Sunday in question, however, there had been an unusual number of large payments the day before, which had been sent to us direct, instead of, as usual, to our bank in Hamburg. The cause for this had been a private exhibition in our building of a number of new wares, new designs and textures, for the inspection of which representatives of our most important clients had come in person. They had taken this opportunity to pay off bills which had been allowed to run on for some time. The gentlemen all left us by Saturday evening, and on Sunday morn-

ing my cashier and myself went over the money in the safe and checked off the amounts again. Therefore the theft must have occurred either on Sunday afternoon or during the night from Sunday to Monday; of course I cannot tell which; but when I entered my office on Monday morning I found my clerks in great excitement. The window panes had been smeared with soap and broken in from the outside, the large safe had been moved from the wall and the back broken in. All the gold and paper money, to the amount above mentioned, was gone, but the envelopes with drafts had been untouched.

There were no other strangers present when the payments were made. There remains, therefore, only the, to me, very sad explanation that some member of my business force must have thus ill repaid my confidence. I could easily lose the actual amount of money, but my relations with my employees are such that the thought that I might find the thief among them would depress me most terribly. There is nothing proven as yet, and I can still hope that some outsider may have committed this crime—indeed I wish from the bottom of my heart that it may be so. But our researches hitherto have proved absolutely nothing. If you can send me one of your men I will be very grateful for it. And I would be particularly grateful to you if you could telegraph me at once if I may expect anyone and whom. In old friendship,

JOHANN HEINRICH BEHREND.

P. S.—Simply to complete my report, not because I believe it to be of any importance, I would add that the thief took also a large package of lace curtains which lay in my own private office.

J. H. B.

Commissioner Wolff dropped the letter and sat in deep thought. Then he turned his cold gray eyes on his chief and asked in a business-like tone:

"You'll allow me a few questions, sir?"

Police-senator Lachmann nodded.

"Mr. Behrend has been a friend of yours from your youth?"

"We were at school together and have been friends ever since."

"May I ask what is meant by the pleasant hopes for the future of which Mr. Behrend speaks?"

The senator was silent a moment. Then he said, "Why, yes, of course. I know you so long and have given you so much con-

fidence already that I feel sure of your discretion in what is purely a personal family matter. I have, as you know, an only daughter. It is the heartfelt wish of the parents in both families that my child and my friend's son should be united in a bond that will bring us all still closer together."

"Thank you, sir. When will you send the answer to Mr. Behrend?"

"At once, I thought."

"May I ask that you do not telegraph?"

"Certainly. I will send a letter if you prefer, and you may dictate it yourself. I will send it with a personal letter of my own."

The commissioner took Behrend's letter and the newspaper and went out. He returned in fifteen minutes and handed his chief the following letter to be signed:

Mr. Johann Heinrich Behrend, Sr.,
Neuenfelde, Holstein:

SIR: Permit me to inform you herewith that I have given our Criminal Commissioner Wolff the necessary leave to make researches into the affair of the robbery from your office. I am sorry to say, however, that the commissioner is still occupied in the investigation of another crime, and that it will be several days before he is able to leave here. At the latest you may expect him in four days, however, and his work for you will begin at once after his arrival. As you are still continuing your own researches I hope that the small delay will not be of any importance. The unavoidable delay before our office was notified at all has already given the thief an opportunity to put himself and his loot in safety. The commissioner has his orders to report to you personally at once on his arrival.

CHIEF OF POLICE LACHMANN.

Senator Lachmann could not control a slight smile. "To-day is Friday—hm—according to this they will not expect you before Monday—hm." He signed the letter. "When do you start?"

"In an hour, sir."

"And when will you be in Neuenfelde?"

"This evening, sir."

* * * * * * *

A single passenger descended from the ten o'clock train of the same evening in Neuenfelde, a gentleman of military bearing, in clothes of fashionable cut, with a sharply marked face and cold gray eyes.

He proceeded to the office of the firm of Johann Heinrich Behrend & Son.

A servant in a quiet gray livery took his card and handed it to the chief of the firm. Mr. Behrend, Sr., read the card carefully: GEORGE ENGEL, REPRESENTING HARRY S. EGGER & SON, LONDON AND BERLIN.

"Take the gentleman to Mr. Juritz, Franz," he said. "I will be glad when my son is at home again. This affair has made me so nervous that I dislike to see anybody new."

"Just as you say, sir." Franz threw an anxious glance at his master and went out.

Bernhard Juritz's office lay next to that of his employer, another door leading from it into the room where the safe stood. The cashier sat in a comfortable armchair, and pressed his hand to his forehead when the servant brought him the card, as if he had first to collect his thoughts, and bring himself back to the affairs of everyday life.

"Send for Detlev." When the clerk had entered Juritz asked, reading aloud the name and the firm on the card, "Has this gentleman been announced to us?"

"No, Mr. Juritz."

"Thank you." He dismissed the clerk with a wave of his hand.

"Mr. Behrend told me to send him to you," remarked the servant.

"All right, send him in."

He turned over some letters but rose from his chair as Engel entered. The latter's manner was so decided in his firm politeness that he compelled an equal attitude.

"What can I do for you?"

When they had both seated themselves, Engel told his errand in a few words. The London firm which he represented was to open a branch shop in Berlin, and he had been appointed manager. The Berlin branch desired to accord all honor to any German national sentiments and to acquire a good stock of home-made wares, as well as those of foreign make. It was his duty to seek out the most important manufacturers of the country, and eventually to sign for the orders. The firm of Behrend

& Son had such an excellent reputation that it was to them at first that he had come, to examine the factory and the specimens of their work, and to place his orders at once if all should be as he expected.

While Engel was speaking, Juritz had taken up a paper-knife with which his fingers played mechanically. Engel's sharp gray eyes glanced keenly at the man opposite him.

Juritz's sharp-featured face showed energy, but the dull glance of his eyes and the foolish play with the evidently unheeded instrument in his hands showed a physical and mental weakening, for the moment at least. His low forehead and broad, full-lipped mouth pointed to strong animal desires, and the dark rings about his eyes were evidence of dissipation.

When Engel had finished the cashier turned to him, and the dulness of his eyes brightened just a trifle.

"Your orders will be large ones, presumably?" he asked.

"From 100,000 to 150,000 marks' worth."

"Hm! well, then you of course will excuse me if I make my investigations as to what security your firm offers for such a large sum."

"Naturally. The German Bank in Hamburg, which is in constant connection with our London house, will give you all information. Besides this, it is our custom to pay cash on all our orders."

The cashier wrote down a few notes. Even in the most important houses the prospect of orders of such size would have awakened considerable interest and attention. Juritz remained absolutely calm.

"We are very appreciative of your coming to us, Mr. Engel. You may be sure that if we do close our dealings, we will serve you in the best manner. I am taking for granted that you will remain here for several days? Then you will perhaps come at this time to-morrow? I will report to my chief and will ask that he see you himself."

* * * * * * *

Late that afternoon the Behrend carriage drove past the Inn. It contained Mr. Juritz and another gentleman.

"Aha! the secret agent," cried the landlord, who stood at the window with Engel.

"The secret agent?" repeated the stranger.

"The one they sent us from Kiel, I mean, the criminal official. He's driving with Juritz."

"Are they out for fun?"

"Probably. Or they may have found a new clue. They have been driving around through all the villages in the neighborhood for the last week. The local authorities watch every man who comes or goes from any of these places."

"Hm! Mr. Juritz and his companions take things easy," said Engel. "I think I'll take a little walk myself," he added, and went out, turning his steps towards the Behrend house. When he had learned that the head of the firm was at home, he sent in his card and was received at once.

Mr. Behrend arose at his entrance and, after greeting him, pointed to an inviting-looking armchair which stood beside his large desk.

"My representative has told me of the very flattering connections that you may possibly make with us. Permit me to give you my thanks, and to say that we will endeavor to show our appreciation of your confidence in every way."

The old gentleman's manner and tone were so full of quiet dignity that his visitor felt drawn to him at once. Behrend, Sr., was not particularly imposing in appearance, not quite so much so as Engel had imagined he should be as the head of a great enterprise, and a self-made man. But the high forehead and clear eyes of the delicate looking man of scarcely medium height had an expression of such high intelligence that it was quite easy to understand his success.

"May I ask your permission to drop business for to-day?" asked Engel. "I am come now to tell you of my sincere sympathy for you in this unfortunate affair which has recently happened in your house. During the past few weeks I have been traveling a great deal, and while in Paris chance brought me together with the head of the Hamburg firm, Lachmann & Co. From them I heard much about you and your splendid business; of course they knew nothing then of this unfortunate robbery. I learned of it first here and wish to assure you of my sympathy."

Behrend gave him his hand.

"Many thanks. Yes, fate has dealt hardly with me. I do not understand it at all yet myself. It may even remain a riddle forever—in fact, I do not know whether I perhaps myself do not wish that it may. So you met Lachmann in Paris? I have

known him from my youth and have just now requested his brother, who, as you may know, is the head of the Hamburg police force, to send me a capable official who may be able to throw some light on this sad affair. I am sorry to say that the official who has been chosen cannot be expected before Monday or Tuesday—several days more without any help, therefore."

Behrend shook his gray head. It was evident that the affair depressed him deeply. There was something almost pathetically helpless in his attitude when speaking about it.

"Yes, I know the brother is senator. I have known the family for years, through our London house. I met the senator's daughter—his only child, I believe—a couple of years ago in Heligoland. She is a young lady of unusual beauty, and I believe of great character also. She was just nineteen years old then."

A charming smile brightened Behrend's face.

"Yes, indeed," he said, "Hedwig Lachmann is a sweet child, pure, and true as gold."

Behrend continued the conversation about the family of his friend for some little time, and Engel, who seemed to know them all very well, won his confidence rapidly. He came back, finally, to the question of the robbery, and was able to put the old gentleman through what was almost a cross-examination without his realizing it.

"And you have no suspicion of anybody?" he asked.

"How should I? I believe firmly that none of my employees could have had anything to do with it. The official from Kiel joins me in this opinion, as does my cashier. But in spite of this Juritz has made researches among the men, very carefully but very thoroughly, without any result however—or with one result, at least, that we now know that our confidence has not been deceived."

"That would, indeed, be a cause for rejoicing. Have they found any clue on the outside?"

"Not the slightest."

"And the thieves left nothing behind them that might betray them?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Ah, indeed! that certainly does look like professional work. The case begins to interest me. Might I see the safe, Mr. Behrend; I mean the damaged one?"

Behrend rose at once and led his guest into the strong room.

The offices were empty, only the servant Franz was busy in one of the rooms.

The safe still stood where it had been pushed out from the wall. The back had been literally torn apart. Engel recognized at once that it had been done by the strongest sort of instruments used by professional thieves. He noticed one thing: the fact that of the two compartments used for money, which were closed with their own particular doors, only one had been opened. Had the thief known that the currency was kept in this compartment? or had it been mere chance that led him to this place first? In this case he might have had enough in the rich booty that he found there, and did not care to seek further. Engel was so lost in thought that the manufacturer had to repeat his request that they might now drop this unpleasant theme.

"I suppose you feel the same as I do," said Behrend, smiling. "I had never seen anything like that before, and the sight fascinated me. But now come with me and do me the honor to take supper with us. My wife will join with me in greeting you as our guest."

* * * * * * *

The large drawing-room was full of warm comfort. Engel's glance fell again and again on the superb lace curtains that hung before the high windows.

"Those are really quite the handsomest curtains I have ever seen," he said finally. "The design is superb and the workmanship really remarkable. I must congratulate you; they are your own manufacture, I suppose?"

"Yes, indeed, and they are the pride of my good Juritz. The design was made for the Russian Prince Perkalow, and has not been put on the market at all. There in the middle, where you see my monogram, the other specimens have the monogram of the prince, with his coronet. With the permission of the prince I kept back two pieces of the original set, which I hoped to exhibit sometime. But it was just these curtains that our friend the robber took with him. The gentleman certainly has artistic taste, has he not?"

The examination of the factory next morning took about an hour. Juritz was a good leader and explained everything clearly. Engel listened and looked in silence, showing his attention by an occasional single word or nod. He bade farewell to the cashier and sent in his card to the head of the firm. Mr. Behrend was engaged and the visitor had to wait in an anteroom. On the

table here lay an album, which he began to study with interest. The large volume held at least five hundred photographs, evidently employees of the firm. Engel turned the leaves hastily. On the first page was a large picture of the chief, all by itself. Then, on the next side, not Juritz's face as he had hoped, but that of someone unknown to him. They were evidently arranged according to time of service. Engel turned over the next leaf. Yes, there it was, Juritz's characteristic countenance. With a quick motion Engel removed the picture from the book and slipped it into his pocket. Then he called the servant; "I am afraid I should only disturb Mr. Behrend now. Tell him that I can come to-morrow morning just as well."

He left the building and went to the railway station. "Second-class, Kiel, excursion." He arrived at noon and went at once to the police station.

When he had sent in his card he explained: "I am a friend of the firm Behrend & Son, and would like to take some more active interest in the researches into this mysterious robbery. I believe I have discovered a clue and would like to put in a request for official aid. Should I be mistaken, nothing need be said about it; but if I am not mistaken, the police can only be grateful to me. What I have discovered is this: One of the employees of the firm—his name need not be mentioned as yet—is frequently absent from Neuenfelde, and is said to be here in Kiel, on pleasure bent. He leaves Saturday evening and returns Sunday evening or very early Monday morning. From hints let drop by people in Neuenfelde, I understand that the gentleman leads a rather gay life here, and to discover the truth of this is the reason for my coming. Here is his photograph. I would ask that you would let it circulate among your officials that we may find out whether any one of them has ever seen the gentleman, and where."

The picture wandered from hand to hand through the rooms until finally a policeman declared that he had seen the gentleman not very long ago—two or three Sundays past perhaps, in the restaurant Wriedt, where he was frequently stationed. The gentleman was there with a lady.

"Did you know the lady?" asked Engel.

"No, sir."

"She was not one of the gay world?"

"I think not, sir. She was very well dressed, but not in any way conspicuous."

Engel took an official with him and started out for the restaurant. And here he let the picture circulate again. In a few moments one of the waiters declared decidedly that he knew the gentleman, and that he also knew the name of the lady: "Lore Düfken." He had often heard her called Lore, and once when the gentleman had introduced her to someone else, he had heard her last name. He had remembered it because it was so like his own, which was Düfke.

"Does the gentleman spend much money here?" asked the police official.

"He has a couple of bottles of wine usually, and he orders champagne occasionally, but his bills are no larger than those of many others."

It was easy to discover the address of the lady in question through the official Census Lists.

"Since you are acting on a mere suspicion," the official said to his energetic companion, "you had better be very careful. What excuse will you use to enter the apartment?"

Engel smiled. "That is very simple. When going up the stairs I will remember any one of the names on the doors and ask for information about the owner of it. Don't you think you could use me in your business?"

"Don't be too sure of yourself. I will wait at the next corner there, in the cigar store."

Engel climbed the stairs and rang the bell at the door upon which stood the name "B. Düfken, widow."

An elderly woman opened the door.

"Have I the honor of speaking to Mrs. Düfken?"

"Yes, what may I——" She interrupted herself and looked sharply at the gentleman, whose decidedly aristocratic appearance made her appear to doubt whether it was proper to let him stand outside the door. "Won't you please come in? I will be at your service in a moment."

Engel entered a little reception room, the attractive furnishing of which held his attention at once. The question arose in his mind as to where all these evidences of riches came from. The furniture, in English style, was noticeably new. The chairs and tables, the upholstery, were perfect in finish. The only part of the room that showed any use at all was the heavy carpet. The ladies who lived here must be very well off—or else this extravagant outfit was very much out of place and was not here by right or reason. This last opinion grew more decided in Engel's mind

when the woman entered again and he could see her in the clear light of the room. There was nothing refined or aristocratic in her appearance, her manner was awkward, her clothing very ordinary. She was one of a kind that could be seen by the hundred anywhere, a woman brought up in quite other surroundings than these, and who had evidently not yet been able to adapt herself to affluence.

Engel carried out his purpose and asked about the gentleman who lived on the floor below. The old lady was evidently a gossip, and had so much to say about her neighbor that it was very easy for her visitor to lengthen the time of his stay and to win her confidence. When he could find absolutely nothing more to say about the gentleman on the floor below, he began to compliment the woman on her beautiful home.

"My dear madame," he said with apparent eagerness, "if I were not afraid of asking too much of your kindness I would make still one more request. Would you be kind enough to show a stranger like myself the other rooms of your charming home, which I know are just as attractive as this one?"

The woman smiled, evidently flattered. "Why, of course, if it really interests you," she said.

"But please do not do it if it disturbs you in the least," said Engel in polite entreaty.

She opened a side door. "This is our finest room, our drawing-room." She led Engel into a large corner room, which was furnished and decorated throughout in rococo style. It was all of the very best, and quite expensive enough to be absolutely out of keeping with the owner of it.

In the next room they found a young woman in a white house-gown, who turned her bright brown eyes on the stranger in curiosity, and then quickly pushed aside her work, which covered almost half the floor, so that they might enter. The young lady, evidently the daughter of the other woman, was very pretty, slender, and graceful, with a delicate face and attractive expression. Her movements were extremely elastic and noticeably graceful, so much so that she would have attracted Engel's attention had his eyes not fallen on the curtain spread on the floor. It was a heavy lace curtain of richest design and workmanship. A similar—no, the identical design of those he had seen in the Villa Behrend! And there, half ripped out, was a monogram with a coronet.

Engel had to struggle for control. "My dear young lady,"

he said, "I must beg your pardon for this invasion. I am afraid I have disturbed you."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," answered the girl, with a sweet, rich voice. She noticed the interest with which her visitor looked at the curtain and she continued with a laugh, "Isn't it pretty? but look at this coronet here! What should we want with a coronet? I am just ripping it out, and it's no easy work, I assure you!"

"The curtains are a present, I suppose?"

"Yes, my fiancé gave them to me. The design was made for some foreign prince, and he is the only one, besides us, who has such curtains—except a thief who stole the last samples from the factory. Nice sort of company to be in, isn't it?" She said the words quite harmlessly, with a touch of humor.

"Stolen?" asked Engel.

"Yes, last Saturday, my fiancé—but no one knows of our engagement as yet—sent these curtains here, and during the night from Sunday to Monday, the last two samples were stolen from the factory, when the safe was robbed."

"A safe robbery? How interesting!" asked Engel, as if in surprise.

"Why, yes, in the house of Behrend & Son, in Neuenfelde. Hadn't you heard of it? The papers were full of it." And she told her visitor all she knew about the robbery, in her interest letting the fact escape her that her fiancé's name was Juritz.

* * * * * * *

In the autumn of the following year the wedding of young Behrend with the daughter of Senator Lachmann was celebrated, and a most welcome guest at the festivities was Commissioner Wolff, now called by his colleagues in the office, "The Angel (Engel) of the Lace Curtains."

STRANGE TRACKS

BALDUIN GROLLER *was born at Arad, Hungary, on September 5, 1848. He held many important editorial and literary positions in Austria, chief among them being his editorship of the "Neues Wiener Journal." He was also vice-president of the Konkorida, the largest and most powerful literary association of Austria. He died in Vienna on the 22nd of March, 1916.*

Groller's earlier writings were of a humorous nature—for the most part sketches dealing with Austrian newspaper life. His first book was published in 1883 under the title of "Weltliche Dinge." In 1890 appeared "Unter vier Augen," which was the forerunner of many detective and mystery novels by him. Of these may be mentioned "Töte sie" (1892), "Schuldig" (1897), "Doppelnatur" (1900), "Die Ehre des Hauses" (1906), "Das Rätsel des Blutes" (1906), "Eine Panik" (1908), and "Detektiv Dagoberts Taten und Abenteuer" (1909). The numerous short stories comprising his Dagobert series (issued in six volumes of Reclams Universal-Bibliothek) are as famous in Austria as Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories in England and America; and modern Austrian literature, both critical and scientific, contains many references to Herr Dagobert and his feats.

Groller has also written a number of serious non-fiction books. His "Wie man Weltgeschichte macht"—an attack on the pro-German methods of writing history, as exemplified by the school of Treitzschke—created a sensation when it appeared in 1900. And "Aus der weltlichen Komödie"—a volume of philosophic essays—is almost as well known.

"Die seltsame Fährte" ("Strange Tracks"), which is printed herewith, is taken from "Detektiv Dagoberts Taten und Abenteuer."

STRANGE TRACKS

(Die seltsame Fährte)

By Balduin Groller *

At six o'clock on a beautiful Saturday morning in September Dagobert was roused by his valet. His friend, Andreas Grumbach, President of the Industrial Club, had sent an urgent message asking him to come with all possible speed. A murder had been committed.

Immediately Dagobert leaped out of bed, and rushed into the bathroom. No matter how urgent the occasion he would never forego his matutinal routine. He took his usual cold shower, had his customary rub-down by his valet, and then went through the gymnastic exercises with which he always started his day. As he hurriedly drew on his clothes, with the able assistance of his valet, the messenger, Grumbach's chauffeur Marius, reported the details of the murder.

A trifle pale from fright and excited by his mad rush, he poured forth the following facts: The Grumbachs were spending their vacation at their château on the Danube, near the old historical city of Pöchlarn. The château was part of an estate so extensive that it embraced the villages of Palting, Hiersau, Eichgraben——

"Go on, go on," Dagobert interrupted. He knew these details better even than did the chauffeur.

"Yesterday evening," continued the messenger, "Mathias Diwald, the forester, came to the château, as he did every Friday, to receive the money for the game-keepers and wood-cutters and take it to the estate office for the Saturday pay-roll. But Diwald never returned to the office. They waited for him there until eleven p.m., and then the head game-keeper and two assistants went out to search for him. At three o'clock in the morning he was found at the edge of the forest, murdered and robbed of

* Translated by N. L. Lederer, Ph.D.

the money. The head keeper then hurried to the château and informed his master."

"Did Frau Grumbach hear the details?" asked Dagobert. He was anxious that the gruesome details should be kept from her.

"Yes. She rose at once, and it was she who asked Herr Grumbach to send immediately for Herr Dagobert. I do not know, of course, how the murder happened, but I believe the circumstances were——"

Dagobert stopped him. He did not wish to hear any more. It was an old principle of his never to listen to second-hand testimony before beginning an investigation.

"When did you leave?" he asked the chauffeur.

"Four o'clock, sharp, Herr Dagobert. And I was here at six to the minute."

"What is the distance?"

"Ninety-six kilometers." *

"In two hours. Not so bad. Of course, we'll have to do better on the way back."

"But, Herr Dagobert——"

"Do better, I said. That is hardly asking too much of a sixty-horse-power Mercedes. I am taking a stop-watch along, and shall time you. Listen, Marius: for every minute under two hours in your running time back to the château, I will give you two kronen. If ever time is money, it is in these cases."

Marius, from his own standpoint, agreed with this view; and they reached Palting Castle in one hour and thirty-two minutes. Marius, with undisguised satisfaction, collected his merited reward of fifty-six kronen.

Frau Grumbach, who was waiting on the terrace, ran down the wide stairway when she saw Dagobert's patriarchal head rise from the big car, welcoming her old friend even more cordially than usual. She was pale and very much upset by the terrible occurrence. Dagobert's presence calmed her somewhat,—she knew that now everything would be done to exact full atonement for the crime.

"I have waited breakfast for you," she began. "But we have only twenty minutes in which to eat. At half past eight the Judicial Commission will meet here to begin the investigation. My husband has gone to get the Commission together now."

* Sixty miles.

Dagobert enjoyed his breakfast. He had not taken time for such trifles before leaving home.

The Commission, led by the master of the house, arrived punctually. Grumbach made the necessary introductions, and immediately the proceedings were begun. There were present: the District Judge with his secretary; the District Attorney's representative; the County Surgeon, Dr. Ramsauer; the chief of the local gendarmes; and the head game-keeper.

The District Attorney's representative was not a State dignitary. He was the local barber, who merely functioned by proxy at such occasions and made the necessary motions for the instigation of the judiciary proceedings. The case under investigation, on account of its gravity, would not come under the jurisdiction of the District Court, but would be brought before the Circuit Court. The District Attorney and the Examining Magistrate would not arrive until the following day; and it was the duty of those assembled to prepare the report as accurately as possible so as to give a clear presentation of the case. Also, it was incumbent on the Commission to take every precaution to preserve intact all the circumstances that might tend toward a solution of the crime.

The preliminaries of the meeting occupied but a short time. The Commission had met at the château merely that they might approach the site of the crime together. Their preliminary examination was to take place at the actual scene of the murder, and the minutes were to be drawn up afterwards in accordance with their findings. There had, however, already been considerable activity in connection with the case. The head game-keeper, when he had found the body, had placed his two assistants near the corpse to prevent anyone from approaching it before the Commission arrived. He had then summoned the District Judge and the chief gendarme; and, after some discussion, two gendarmes and two armed foresters had been sent out to search the woods.

Grumbach had informed the members of the Commission that a famous detective had been called upon to take charge of the investigation, and now they were eager to know if Dagobert approved of their preliminary measures.

"So far, all's in order," Dagobert said. "But now we must get to the scene of the crime as quickly as possible. Every minute counts."

The outskirts of the wood where Diwald had been murdered

were a quarter of an hour's walk from the château. Grumbach asked if they should ride or go on foot. In any event the carriages stood ready; but it was suggested that if they walked they might discover some clues on the way. Dagobert decided, however, that they should ride, announcing that the investigation was to begin only after they had inspected the body.

The Commission drove off in two carriages. Frau Grumbach and Dagobert took the automobile, which, driven by Marius, brought up the rear of the procession. They had been on their way scarcely two minutes when Frau Grumbach halted the car and, descending, threw a few coins into the hat of a beggar sitting at the side of the road.

"You might have thrown the money without getting out," Dagobert objected, when she returned to the car.

"No, Dagobert. Look at him. What would he do if I should miss the hat? He can hardly move."

Dagobert looked. The cripple was of monstrous and loathsome physique. He had an ugly, abnormally large head which showed every sign of hydrocephaly. His shoulders were powerful, and his arms abnormally long and strong, though the lower part of his body was terribly stunted, the legs being like those of a child of four years, and strangely twisted and crippled. It was difficult to imagine how he could move at all.

"Drive on, Marius," ordered Dagobert when Frau Grumbach had resumed her seat in the car. "We must be the first to arrive."

In a short time they had caught up to the others. Frau Grumbach reverted to the subject of the cripple.

"He is the only beggar in our district," she said, and added by way of excuse: "We would have placed him in an institution so that he would not have had to beg, but I've always felt that it would be cruel to deprive him of his profession. As it is, he can sit at the roadside, and at least he can see the world about him. Since he cannot move, it would be heartless, I think, to lock him up in a room. Now if he shows himself at the roadside every passerby gives him something."

The well-kept road led to the edge of the woods. When they came within sight of the foresters guarding the corpse, Dagobert stopped the car.

"You, Frau Violet, stay here in the car. The dead man will be no sight for your eyes. I will report to you later if I find out anything."

With these words he walked to the place where the body lay. The two foresters had done their duty,—it could be immediately seen that no unauthorized person had approached the murdered man. A number of peasants, in awed silence, formed a wide circle about the spot. Dagobert did not touch the body, but looked around for possible clues with which to begin his investigation.

When the Commission arrived the surgeon was permitted to approach first. He knelt down and, with some exertion, turned over the body which had been lying face downward. His findings, given at intervals during the examination, were:

"Suicide or accident out of the question. . . . Murder beyond a doubt. . . . The man was strangled. . . . Finger-prints are plainly visible. . . . *Pomus Adami* crushed. Moreover, the thyroid cartilage and the Santorian cartilage are broken. . . . Death must have been instantaneous. . . . The murder was committed eight or ten hours ago—probably before midnight."

"Permit me, doctor," said Dagobert; "the exact time might be of some importance. I believe we have the necessary data at hand."

"I do not think so, Herr Dagobert," replied the surgeon. "Science does not make it possible for us to fix the time of death to the hour or minute."

"In that case, then, we will have to try without science. It rained last evening or last night. Though the road is now dry, one can see that it has been raining recently, especially here where the body was lying. The wet clothes of the victim, now almost dry, have left a moist rim on the ground. We will surely be able to ascertain when the rain began."

"I can state that to the minute," put in the head gamekeeper. "From a quarter to eight until eight we had quite a downpour, with thunder and lightning."

"So we have a start anyway," said Dagobert. "I maintain that the murder was committed before the rain fell. See for yourselves. The ground under the body is dusty, whereas the road is dry but not dusty. There is also evidence that the rain began falling immediately after the murder,—but of this more later: the indications may prove to be misleading, and we will not go into that point at present. However, the dust does not lie. So, then, Diwald was killed before a quarter to eight. We know that he received the money at the château at half past six, and that he put the linen bag containing it into his pocket.

Furthermore, it has been ascertained that he went from the château to the village tavern, drank two pints of wine, and started on his way home shortly after the seven-o'clock Angelus bell tolled. After this, however, the time does not seem to jibe; but the difference is only a matter of minutes.—I am convinced that he got here shortly before the rain began. But walking here should have taken him at the most a quarter of an hour. We do not know why he took at least twice as long; but we have succeeded in fixing the time within a quarter of an hour."

The members of the Commission continued to discuss the various matters relating to the crime, and exchanged opinions and advice as to the proper methods of procedure. Dagobert did not disturb them. He returned to Frau Grumbach; and Marius was told to drive back slowly to the château.

"Well, Dagobert," asked Frau Grumbach, "have you hopes?"

Dagobert briefly related the facts and continued to inspect the side of the road with great interest. He then lapsed into silence and appeared to be considering the case.

"It was an ordinary murder for robbery," he said after a while. "And yet it has certain peculiar features. The indications contradict one another in a seemingly incomprehensible way. One is led to the belief that the murderer is a native of these parts—some one who was familiar with local conditions. One does not attack a poor forest guard unless one is pretty certain that he is carrying a large sum of his master's money."

"For a miserable 450 kronen!" said Frau Grumbach, tears coming into her eyes. "We would rather have lost ten or even a hundred times that amount than the life of a loyal and devoted servant."

"Only a local person could have known of Diwald's regular Friday mission to the château. And yet the signs all point to a stranger.—Tell me, Frau Violet, has there been, within the past few days, any circus with acrobats or tumblers in the village?"

"Surely not, Dagobert."

"Or gypsies?"

"Neither."

"Has there been a fête of any kind in the neighborhood?"

"Not within miles."

"It's very strange—and something quite new to me. I would have sworn the murderer was an acrobat."

"Why an acrobat, of all men?"

"Or have you in the village somebody who is known to do acrobatic tricks?"

"No, Dagobert."

"It's enough to drive one insane. I can prove that it was a native who killed Diwald; and I can prove, just as conclusively, that it could not have been a native."

They had now arrived at the place where the cripple was sitting. Dagobert suddenly threw him two pieces of silver with one gesture. The coins flew apart, and neither of them dropped into the extended hat. Both fell upon the roadway several yards from the beggar. Dagobert descended from the car, but was in no haste to help retrieve the money. Instead, with somewhat cruel indifference, he watched the cripple move along on his hands to collect the coins. Then he reentered the car and drove to the château, arriving there simultaneously with the Commission.

The members immediately busied themselves with the drawing up of their report. Dagobert, apparently not wishing to disturb them, retired. He would, he said, take a short walk and look at the scenery until they had finished.

The secretary was occupied for a little over an hour drawing up the minutes which had been dictated to him by the District Judge; and the finished report was just about to be read over to the Commission, preparatory to its being signed by the members present, when Dagobert arrived. Grumbach was very much pleased that he had returned, and asked him to listen to the reading of the minutes so that, if they were in accord with his views, he, too, could sign them.

"I don't think that will be necessary," replied Dagobert, taking a seat. "I rather fancy we will have to draw up a new report.—Here is the stolen money."

He came forward and placed on the table the little linen bag that Diwald had always used. The amount of the money, as was immediately ascertained, was complete. The members of the Commission were greatly excited. Frau Grumbach threw Dagobert a look of pride and gratitude: she knew—and had always said—that they could rely on Dagobert.

At once the questions began to fly. Since he had recovered the money, he must be in possession of clues pointing to the actual culprit.

"As far as the culprit is concerned," said Dagobert, "I have

taken the liberty of apprehending him myself and delivering him to the local jail."

"Who, in Heaven's name—who is it?"

"Permit me to proceed in order. The surgeon had determined two things with certainty—the impossibility of suicide, and death by strangulation. He did not add, however—and anyhow it was no concern of his—that the circumstances showed that the attack had been made from behind. This fact is proved by the plainly visible finger-prints on the throat, and by the position of the body—which was face downward. There were no signs of a fight or a struggle; and from this arose the first difficulty in analyzing the situation. It was hard to conceive that the attack had been made so quickly and suddenly that the victim had had no time even to turn round.—The second difficulty was still more bewildering. Indeed, I was confronted by something entirely new—something that perhaps had never happened before. The chief of gendarmes, you recall, had conscientiously looked for footprints. Conditions for such a search were partly advantageous, partly disadvantageous. Disadvantageous, because any footprints made before the storm would have been obliterated by the rain. Advantageous, because any footprints made after the rain had fallen would be, after drying, all the plainer, since the soil at the scene of the crime contained lime.

"Now, there were no footprints visible aside from those made by Diwald himself. But there was something that was not at first observed—something that presented an extraordinary riddle. Hand prints! I was able to follow these strange tracks easily, and I came to the conclusion that the crime had been committed by an acrobat who, in order that he should make no footprints, had left the place standing on his hands and with his feet in the air.

"This conclusion, however, was wrong, although the murder was certainly done by someone who walks on his hands. In the whole district there is only one man who does this—the beggar Lipp. And he is the murderer."

"Impossible! Quite impossible!" came the unanimous opposition. "The man cannot move."

"Be calm, gentlemen. He is unquestionably the criminal. And the crime was all the more repulsive because it was the reward of an act of charity on Diwald's part. Lipp had asked Diwald to carry him part of the way home. Diwald took the cripple on his back and carried him, thereby sealing his own

fate. This also explains the difference in time, which I previously noted. With his burden Diwald took half an hour for a trip which otherwise would have required only a quarter of an hour.

"My investigations are complete. Besides, I have here Lipp's confession signed before me and the chauffeur Marius as witnesses. When I left you I took Marius along and told him to put a strong rope in his pocket. I also borrowed from your gendarme a pair of handcuffs. We went to Lipp's hut. His housekeeper, an old hag, was there, and she was in a towering rage. Last night, she complained, Lipp had been late again in coming home; he had stayed at the tavern until ten o'clock. I straightway found out that he had not been at the tavern at all; and I also ascertained that, with his slow method of locomotion, it would require at least two hours for him to get home from the *situs criminis*.

"The rest is obvious. I searched his hut, and found the money under a loose board of the floor. Then I went to the road where Lipp was stationed, and accused him point-blank of murdering Diwald. At first he attempted to deny it; but when I showed him the money he collapsed and tremblingly admitted having done it.

"At a sign from me Marius threw the rope over his shoulders from behind, pinioning his arms to his body. Lipp raised his hands in an instinctive gesture of self-defense, and so presented them to me for the manacles. Marius and I then lifted him into the car and drove to the jail.—As far as I am concerned this closes the case. The final word will rest with his judges. It is they who will decide whether or not he is fully responsible for his acts. . . . I must now ask your permission to go, as I am very busy on another unusually difficult case."

Dagobert bowed to the Commission, kissed Frau Grumbach's hand with his usual courtesy, and two minutes later was on his way back in the car with Marius at the wheel.

Brother & Sister

Once a policeman come along & saw two little boys & a girl playing in an alley. "Oh you naughty children" he exclaimed "come with me." He took them in front of the Judge who asked the first boy what his name was & what he had been doing. The child said "Johnny, I was making bubbles." The Judge asked the second boy the same thing. "My name is Billy, I was making bubbles." Well said the Judge to the little girl who are you? "I'm Bubbles," she replied.